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# MEGARACE™

June, 1994

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## Lowest Common Denominators

It has been said in the past that it is impossible to underestimate the intelligence of the American viewing public. Cynics (including yours truly) will argue that the proof of this statement is shown by simply thumbing through the latest issue of T.V. Guide or by checking out the current fare in box offices nationwide. Attention spans continue to slide, again evidenced by television and movies. Next time you watch a movie, try this: for five minutes, count the number of times the camera angle or shot switches to a different shot. If you come up with less than fifty, I'd be pretty surprised.

True, that sounds pretty pessimistic, but arguments like this, and I'm often as guilty as anybody at stating said arguments, can be in part proven wrong by looking at the average computer gamer (there, you knew I'd bring it around to gaming somehow, didn't you?). How so? Look at the kinds of games that are popular on the PC.

Computer gamers usually are drawn to gaming on the PC or Macintosh because gaming on a computer offers a lot more depth of play, interaction and value than gaming on a video game system. With the memory available on a computer, you can develop longer, more intense games that require more thought to work through and simply more time to conquer. With a keyboard, there are much greater possibilities for interaction at every stage in a game.

So, in spite of my pessimism and cynical nature, there are times when this occupation provides me with relief. I can look at the flood of letters we've received and look across at my co-workers and communicate with people who don't need to see something blow up every couple of seconds. I can read letters from people who have enough self-control that they can delay gratification long enough to play a game for forty or sixty hours before they win. This really cheers me up.

It also cheers me up to get letters and phone calls from readers who want to know why some game companies treat them like idiots. I can't be sure, but I think the answer is that the company in question probably thinks that a lot of its consumers are brain dead. Why shouldn't they, if they are a major corporation and their market for virtually every other product they produce has proven to be a bunch of neandertals?

The majority of game companies, of course, do not treat their customers like morons. But, there are those out there who feel that we as a general public can be swayed by pretty pictures, a good sound track and the lowest common denominator.

**...the company in question probably thinks that a lot of its consumers are brain dead.**

There are those who think that instead of an intelligent, rational challenge, we're all looking for bread and circuses. Prove them wrong! Search out the games that reward your intelligence and buy them. Write to the companies that make the games and write to the magazines that cover the games. I've always held that computer gamers are more on the ball than the average person. Continue to prove me right.

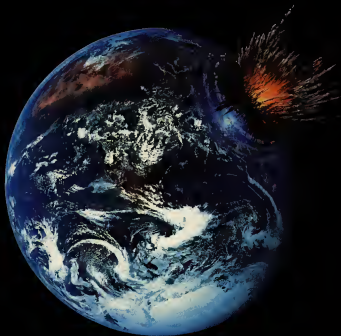
If someone thinks that you don't have a clue, that's how they are going to treat you. You need to make the effort to tell the gaming companies and the media when you think we've belittled your intelligence or when we've pushed for the lowest common denominator when we shouldn't have. It's our job to bring you what you want, which means that it's your job to tell us when we have and when we haven't.

On a completely unrelated note, I'd like to thank the kind staff of the Score Sports Radio 820 in Chicago for the timely assist. As we were finishing this issue up, I could not find verification on the spelling of Al Geiger's name (check out the pictures on page 47). They gave it to me promptly and, might I add, correctly.

**So, in spite of my pessimism and cynical nature, there are times when this occupation provides me with relief.**

**Steve Honeywell**  
**Editor**

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## NEWS

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Acquisitions strengthen CD-ROM market. . Interactive self-defense for women. . Comic books and CD-ROM technology merge. . I-Motion forges ahead into multimedia horror. . Millions of CD-ROMs pressed in 1993.

## REVIEWS

### PAGE 14

First there were three goblins, then there were two and now just one remains. Join the final goblin as he takes a journey fraught with peril in *Goblins Quest 3* by Coktel Vision and Sierra On-Line.

### PAGE 18

Morphing is the hottest thing on television and in movies, so why should it surprise anyone that it would be tried out in gaming? Check out *ShadowCaster* by Origin.

### PAGE 22

Iron ships on the water, very large and deadly. If you want to check out the ultimate rush of horsepower, strap on an entire fleet in *Great Naval Battles II* by SSL.

### PAGE 26

People have always had a fascination with vampires. Check out your latest cravings for blood and a nice stake with *SSI's Ravenloft*.

### PAGE 30

Guns, gals and glory were the name of the game in the reckless years of the Roaring 20's. Go back in time, oil up your shooting iron, and ask American Laser Games Who Shot Johnny Rock?

### PAGE 34

A man's (or woman's) home is his castle, especially when the Pope has agreed to crown him king! Build your dream palace and show off to the neighbors in *Castles II* by Interplay.

### PAGE 38

When the boys out west get together at IntelliPlay's Cowboy Casino for a nice game of cards, you'd better not be hiding anything up your sleeve.

### PAGE 42

It's baseball season, and it you haven't swung a bat for awhile, you might want to work off the rust with IntelliPlay's *ESPN: Interactive Hitting*.

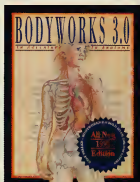
## FEATURES

### PAGE 46

Under a Killing Moon looks to be the next big thing in CD-ROM games, but what else is Access Software hiding up it's sleeve?







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## Problems Encountered, Problems Solved.

Just a note to commend you on being a wonderful and useful magazine, and also to perhaps give a suggestion. I had recently purchased the disk version of Lands of Lore. After several installation attempts under both DOS and Windows, it would always crash at the same place. I had made numerous phone calls to both Westwood and Computer Express (who I had purchased it from) to no avail.

I then returned it for the CD-ROM version. Once again, the crash problem! I finally got in touch with a live human at Westwood and found out that because I have a Gateway, there is a conflict, and a patch disk is in the works!

Now, for my suggestion: Wouldn't it be nice if you added a "bug alert" or something similar in your magazine to address problems such as these? It certainly would save much time, aggravation and \$\$!

You could even have readers write in with problems that they've encountered that have not been addressed prior to release.

Just a thought and keep up the good work!

**Stephanie Kuster**  
Naples, FL

*That's not a bad suggestion, and it's something we've been toying around with for awhile. There are a few problems with the idea, namely, the number of possible reasons that a game would be crashing due to the incredible number of possible system configurations that are out there. Still, it is something to think about for both CGR and CD-ROM Entertainment. We welcome the input of other readers on this topic.*

## Why Don't I Know If It's Coming on CD-ROM?

As a recent buyer of a CD-ROM drive for my home system, one of the reasons behind my purchase was to take advantage of the gobs of gaming fun that can be stored on a CD, freeing up considerable space on my paltry 220 MB hard drive (I use Windows extensively with a number of applications, hence my concern). While I haven't overlooked the significance of games developed exclusively for CDs, my point deals with disk-based games that are eventually converted over to CDs at some later date, usually with some sort of enhancement or added features.

What I am getting at is that it is impossible to tell from your reviews of disk-based games whether or not these titles will be available to

Got a question? Got an answer? Got a comment? Got a gripe? Got to get rid of all of your stamps before the postal rates change? If the answer to any of these questions is "yes" (and even if it isn't), drop us a line at:

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CDs sometime in the near future. I shudder anytime I see anything in the 25-30 MB range, which is pretty often these days, especially for a good RPG. I usually end up leafing through the rest of your publication hoping to spot an ad from the distributor with the availability options (SSI immediately comes to mind), but the games are often not advertised. As such, would it not be possible for you guys to have this information included in the "Game Summary" section of your reviews if it is available from the developer (i.e. CD-ROM availability - Summer, '94)? For example, just looking through the April, '94, issue leaves me wondering whether or not there are any plans by Bethesda to release *The Elder Scrolls: Arena* in a CD format. If so, I will be quite happy to wait for a few months to purchase it in this much more convenient medium. Again, I don't really care about added refinements, although they would be nice. I am really just worried about disk space and don't really need to see or hear *Rebel Assault* or 7th Guest-type qualities to still enjoy a good game.

Hopefully, you will be able to address my concerns for me. I look forward to each of your issues and the only concern I seem to have with your format is with the aforementioned point. Keep up the great work!

**Scott Nye**  
Calgary, AB, Canada

*In the premier issue of CD-ROM Entertainment, a similar question was asked by reader Dianne Hughes. We do try to keep you all alerted to the eventual conversion of a game to CD-ROM, but often times, not only are we unaware that a game is being ported over to CD, the company that created the game is not always sure they are going to do it.*

*Arena from Bethesda Softworks is a great case in point. Is the game coming out on CD-ROM? Maybe. There is a possibility that Bethesda will decide to either directly port the game onto a CD-ROM or that they will*

*enhance the game somewhat. It isn't decided, though. We could tell you that the CD-ROM version is being considered, which it is, but if you wait for a version that doesn't come, you could end up missing out on a truly tremendous gaming experience.*

*We do try to keep you posted on what's coming out on CD-ROM and on how the game will be enhanced, or not enhanced as the case may be. That, in fact, is one of the major purposes of this magazine: we can keep you informed of the CD-ROM world in a much more effective and succinct manner than we ever could in Computer Game Review.*

## Breaking the Next Barrier...

Do you know of any companies who are planning to release an entertainment product that requires an MPC-2 compatible computer? I, along with many other game players, have the horsepower to run such games. I am sick of seeing grainy video, hearing unclear 8-Bit sound and experiencing other limitations associated with slower computers and CD-ROM drives. Another thing that bugs me is that all games today are stuck at the 256-color barrier. I don't think there is any game made to date that has used more than 256 colors. Using 65, 536 colors as designated by the MPC-2 standard (or even using 24-Bit, 16.7 million colors) would drastically improve graphics and more importantly, improve video. I hope game companies realize how much better their games could be if they broke the 256-color barrier.

**Matt Bianchetti**  
Sherborn, MA

P.S. I think it would be helpful to me and other readers if you applied your rating system to CD-ROM games.

*Off hand, I can't think of a game that requires MPC-2. As for scoring CD games, it's something we've talked about. Start sending letters on this topic, folks!*



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# Current Data

THE LATEST NEWS ON THE CD-ROM GAMING INDUSTRY

## NEW ACQUISITIONS IN CD-ROM

*Paramount, 7th Level, Time Warner All Make Major Moves.*

Making a splash in the CD-ROM market may be a question of acquiring the right people. Paramount, Time Warner, Hyper-Quest and relative newcomer 7th Level all recently picked up some new developers or have decided on new directions to help them to the next stage in the CD-ROM community.

Paramount Publishing has teamed up with Davidson & Associates to develop, publish and distribute multimedia products for consumer, reference, business and educational markets.

Davidson, already an established name in the edutainment field, will begin development of curriculum-based software for Paramount. Paramount expects to invest about \$50 million into this market initially.

Also in the works are plans to publish a range of multimedia projects under a Simon & Schuster/Davidson label for the juvenile, adult, reference, business and professional markets using Paramount's library of over 300,000 books. The two companies will share investments and revenues in these products equally. Currently planned for this series are an investment guide based on Peter Lynch's *Beating the Street*; a children's money-managing guide from Neale S. Godfrey, author of *Money Doesn't Grow on Trees*; and

interactive children's books, at least one of which will include a sound track by Ray Charles.

7th Level recently entered the CD-ROM market with its first title *Tuneland*, which featured the voice talents of Howie Mandel. The company has previously announced that it is working on a product that will be based in part on and will contain the feedback of the Monty Python's *Flying Circus* comedy team.

Additionally, 7th Level has recently announced that it has acquired MetroCel Animation Studios' digital inking and painting technology and processes. Moreover, 19 MetroCel employees have agreed to leave MetroCel and begin working at 7th Level's Los Angeles studio.

MetroCel, as the animation division of MetroLight Studios, is best known for its work on the animated television shows *Ren & Stimpy* and *Beavis and Butt-head* as well as numerous award-winning commercials. MetroLight has won an Oscar and several Emmys.

7th Level CEO George Grayson said of the MetroCel production team, "The staff we've added consists of highly-trained specialists who have worked on numerous Hollywood-quality productions under tight timetables and budgets. This team may be the best digital traditional animation

team in existence today."

MetroCel's work appeared in 7th Level's first product, *Tuneland*, and allowed the game to be produced, according to one 7th Level official, in seven months as opposed to a year.

Time Warner Interactive Group (TWIG) just signed on Wharfside Productions, whose principals created the *Carmen Sandiego* series. The agreement is a multi-year deal that has Wharfside developing interactive software for both CD-ROM and for Time Warner's full service network.

Executive Vice President of TWIG, Craig Moody, said "The Wharfside team has created the most popular multimedia titles on the market, and we're pleased they will be the creative force behind the next generation of interactive titles." In addition to the creation of the *Carmen Sandiego* character, Wharfside executives are also responsible for the recent hit *Mario is Missing*. All told, the team has created software products that have generated over \$100 million in sales.

The first Time Warner/Wharfside production is expected to ship in the fall of this year, and current plans slate it as an educational role-playing adventure designed for play with the whole family in mind. Wharfside President John Todd claims that this game will be unlike anything

currently available to the home user. The titles *Wharfside* currently has under development are just a couple of the nearly thirty that Time Warner expects to release by October of 1994.

Hyper-Quest hasn't so much made an acquisition or changed its direction as it has created its direction. On April 13, 1994, this Florida-based company formally declared its incorporation and its intent to produce children's CD-ROM products.

Hyper-Quest has been created by the father and son team of Peter and Julian Yates. The Yates duo were also the founders of Compass Technology, a developer of voice and fax mail software. Compass was acquired by Otel Communicates in 1992 for over \$10 million.

Chairman Peter Yates said that the company's goal is to create education CD-ROM products that will both satisfy a child's need for entertainment and fun as well as the parent's desire to teach. "Our challenge is to create a publishing organization synonymous with the highest standards of both the production and software worlds."

The fledgling endeavor is still creating its network of dealers and catalog distributors, but plans to have its first release for both Windows and Macintosh on store shelves by the Christmas season of 1994.

## SELF-DEFENSE THROUGH SOFTWARE.

As the world gets more and more frightening and the number of violent crimes, particularly against women, increase, the talk about how to defend yourself becomes more and more in the news. Enter Villa Crespo Software and *Escape With Your Life*.

This new CD-ROM is slated for release around early July. And, while the title may sound like a game, the subject matter couldn't be more serious. *Escape With Your Life* includes forty minutes of digitized video that explains and shows in graphic detail how any woman can defend herself from a violent attacker, be it a

carjacker, rapist or abusive spouse.

Once loaded up, the user can select one of several different modes to study simple and effective self-defense techniques. In freeform mode, lessons can be studied in any order, and a VCR-like interface allows for maximum control of the viewing of each maneuver. For those who want to use the product with more than one person, the classroom mode allows for a more interactive method of learning.

Finally, to perfect the actual moves, there is an interactive practice mode that allows the user to perform each move along with the video. The lessons are taught by two martial arts instructors.

*Escape With Your Life* will require Windows to run and will carry a suggested retail price of \$49.95.

## CD-ROM GAMING COMES TO THE LOCAL ARCADE.

American Laser Games, who first hit the arcade scene (and subsequently the CD-ROM scene) with the shoot-'em-up game *Mad Dog McCree* has scored a first for arcade entertainment. The company has released *Shootout at Old Tucson*, the first stand-up arcade game that uses CD-ROM technology.

What this means is that Tucson has the high-quality digitized video normally found in this sort of game, and of the sort the ALG made popular with *Mad Dog McCree*. However, since each game that is produced for this system is transported on a 5" CD-ROM, the owner of the arcade

can switch the machine from game to game as easily as switching a CD-ROM in a stereo. To change a game, you don't need to change anything more than the CD itself. Obviously, future games for this system will require a similar control scheme.

As the name would imply, *Shootout at Old Tucson* is a shooting game similar in style to previous ALG titles (see, for example, *Who Shot Johnny Rock* in this issue). However, should this system take off, the company hopes to produce games with a variety of themes including fighting and driving games.

The units come factory ready to charge fifty cents a play, and there is an option for machines that accept dollar bills. Look for any hot titles for this system to make quick and accurate ports to PC CD-ROM.

## Two Niche Markets for the Price of One!

Years ago, Infocom started a series of comic books on computer disk. The series went by the name of Infocomics. After the releases of the first couple of disk/books, the series faded into oblivion, only remembered by those few people who purchased a copy for their top-of-the-line 286 or Commodore 64.

For those who haven't spent much time in a software store or who never go to a comic book emporium, the idea, which at the time seemed like a pretty good one, has been revived. There are two major differences between this new breed of superhero software and the old. The first is that the new batch of comics come on CD-ROM (thus the CD-ROMIX! name of the line). The second major difference is that this time, the comic books have been produced by a legitimate comic book company, not a software manufacturer.

Malibu Comics, who have recently been looking into the possibility of launching its Ultraverse comic book characters into an animated television series are the people behind the CD-ROMIX! line of titles. The series started with the first issues of three of the company's more popular books, *Prime*, *Freex* and

*Hard Case*, with more titles slated. Industry observer and *Hero Illustrated* editor, Frank Kurtz said, "Prime is probably the one Malibu character with the most potential to explode into the mainstream."

Malibu Comics has been around for almost ten years, but

they've only recently made their name in the superhero market. Last summer, Malibu started the Ultraverse line, hiring away some of the higher profile writers and artists to create these new superheroes. The company has recently started a line of creator-owned comics called *Bravura*,

that involves even higher profile writers and artists.

Despite Malibu's strong ties to the video gaming community, the CD-ROM's are being published by Davidson and Associates, long known for its line of high-quality edutainment.

The question remains, however, as to what the response of the CD-ROM user is going to be. While the average age of the typical comic book reader is steadily rising, most PC gamers, and more specifically, most CD-ROM owners are older. There is a question as to how much crossover there is in the market. Comic book collectors aren't going to be easily convinced to purchase a 386 (the minimum system requirement), and a non-comic collecting PC user probably won't shell out \$24.95 for an interactive comic book.

The upcoming television series, the trading cards and the other licensing being conducted by Malibu makes it seem that *Prime* and the other Ultraverse characters could become a hot commodity, consequently making the CD-ROMIX! line of software the next big thing. Then again, ten years ago, Infocom's *Lance Mastodon* seemed like a good idea as well.



Malibu's CD-ROMIX! Are they the right products at the right time or another case of a misdirected idea?

## Current Data

### How Many is That?...

According to a recent Optical Publishing Association survey, approximately 100 million CD-ROM discs were manufactured in 1993. The results are based on surveys and estimates released by OPA and were obtained by as formal survey of U.S. manufacturers and an informal survey of overseas CD-ROM producers.

How accurate can this survey be when a large chunk of the respondents were surveyed "informally?" Probably more than you'd think, since the OPA estimates that about 70% of the CD-ROM manufacture is done in the U.S., with an additional 25% taking place in Europe.

The numbers are high, and it looks like they may keep growing. The industry is undergoing a growth spurt of about 150% annually. This rate has remained pretty close to constant in the three years that OPA has conducted this survey.

According to OPA executive director Richard A. Bowers, "...the '100 million' number may be an arbitrary benchmark, [but] it is a number significant enough to demonstrate that CD-ROM has become a commercial success." Bowers went on to comment that it is hoped that this information will be used to determine market size in place of what he called "the thinnest of evidence, or, in some cases, no evidence at all."

The market is estimated at 7.5 million CD-ROM drives in North America, based on sales of 4.5 million units in 1993. These figures do not include stand-alone systems, currently dominated by Sega, with about 1 million units in American homes.

## COMPTON'S NEW MEDIA CREATES TWO NEW DIVISIONS.

Compton's New Media, in the efforts of diversification and expansion, has discovered that it needs to compartmentalize somewhat. Because of this, the company has created two new divisions. Compton's Information has been created to expand the company's selections in both the information and the entertainment fields. There are currently more than 35 titles under development in this branch of the company.

The other new division is Compton's Entertainment. While the bulk of the work for this division will be in the CD-ROM market, other possibilities including on-line and cable television are also being looked into.

Among the products first to be released from these new divisions are a Babylon 5 Universal Encyclopedia, a tribute/chronicle CD of the life and music of John Lennon and an interactive trip planner. The travel guide CD is being made with the help of the AAA Motor Club, while the John Lennon and Babylon 5 CD's are being produced in conjunction with Warner Bros. Consumer Products.

## I-MOTION TAKES LOVECRAFT TO NEW LEVELS WITH SHADOW OF THE COMET

When you think of "unnamed" horror, who do you think of? Many think of H.P. Lovecraft, and one of his stories of horror is coming to a CD-ROM near you very soon.

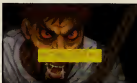
I-Motion will be shipping Shadow of the Comet, the first adventure based on Lovecraft's "Call of Cthulhu" series, in June only on CD-ROM. A sneak preview of the game leads us to believe that this is going to be a much anticipated release.

The game introduction is a visual delight. Good taste abounds as the story is told about a young English reporter setting off to investigate a very strange occurrence. That occurrence is a report of a place, somewhere in America, in which the sky is within an arm's reach!

The graphics look very good and instead of having a grid map for a town layout, Shadow of the Comet boasts a town that actually looks like a turn of the century American village.

The interface looks like it will be up to the expectations the graphics have established and the music is right on target. The true test is in the play, but Shadow of the Comet for now is something to look forward to.

Also included on the CD will be a museum which is a 3D virtual museum of Lovecraft paintings and sculptures in a multimedia format. Estimated retail price is for Shadow of the Comet is \$59.95.



Insane? Sure, but he does make for interesting conversation.

## Save Up Your Spare Change...

Every now and then, a press release comes across the news desk that makes us hope the writer had his or her tongue firmly implanted in his or her cheek. As a result, we aren't sure how to cover it. In this case, we'll simply print the first two sentences of the press release (the italics are ours):

"RPI Advanced Technology Group today announced a major step towards the *affordable future of consumer access to virtual reality*. RPI announced that the Reality Chamber simulation rooms, formerly priced at over \$8 million had been reduced in price to *under \$750,000.00* thanks to technology breakthroughs in software and hardware."

True, this is a significant

## SHAREWARE CD IS ULTIMATE BUDGET BUY.

If you are the type of consumer who would rather get two games for the price of one than a really good price on one game, Spotlight Software has a product with your name all over it. The disk, which should be available now, will retail for about \$35 and will contain hundreds of shareware titles all wrapped up into one tidy package.

The games have been broken down into a variety of categories including adventure, arcade, educational, casino games, puzzle games, sports, Windows games and a lot more. The headlines of the package are, not surprisingly, the shareware versions of Doom and Wolfenstein 3D.

Obviously, a package like this is worth as much as the user thinks it is. Those with the desire or time to weed through the chaff will probably find a good deal of wheat that makes the product worth the money. Others will wonder why someone would bother. Also, remember that if you do find a piece of shareware you like, it benefits you and the developer to register your copy.

drop in price, since the system is now selling for less than 10% of what it sold for a year ago. And, in the same light, it is a step towards affordability. But price drop or not, there still aren't a lot of people with the spare scratch lying around to cover this kind of an expense. In fact, the most viable contract at the moment might be the Defense Department.

Should RPI reduce these prices by the same percentage twice more, the system would still cost around \$7,000, a lot of ducats, but much closer to consumer affordability. And with regards to access, as in being able to go play in a Reality Chamber, three-quarters of a million dollars is a lot of start up cost for a new business that might not fly.

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# News Reporters Can Be Heroes

**Help Blount get his scoop in Goblins Quest 3 by Sierra.**

Journalists are taught to report the news objectively and not interfere. Unfortunately, journalists are often in the best position to help resolve a conflict since they sometimes get the opportunity to visit both sides. But true to their profession, they stay clear of any involvement, as if they were time travelers visiting another era and did not want to disturb history.

In the world of goblins, though, one young reporter does not hold that vow. One young reporter was able to do what many others before him were unable to do—rejoin two rival factions in peace and harmony. For thousands of years, two kingdoms ruled by Queen Xina and King Bodd competed fiercely to be the first to conquer the labyrinth under Mount Foilandre. According to goblin legend the goblin who successfully passes the tests of the Labyrinth will win eternal benefit for his people, just the kind of task fit for a monarch.

So far, those who have tried their luck

have returned completely insane. To this day, a River of Bitterness flows from the

mountain through to the two kingdoms. For many years this struggle has captivat-



**In the world of goblins, there are a number of different goblin species. Here is one of King Bodd's guards posing for the title screen shot.**





Inside the inn is the ship's captain who left Blount for dead at the start of the game.

ed the attention of the greatest historians and especially the readers of *Goblin News*. Blount, one of the most talented journalists for the newspaper, has dreamed, like most young reporters, of obtaining a sensational scoop for a long time. His ship has just come in.

New and alarming developments have occurred. Behorn, the guardian of the Labyrinth who guarantees that the tests are passed fairly, has just died of old age. If that's not bad enough, the key to the entrance of the Labyrinth has disappeared, and Behorn's daughter, Wynonna, has been kidnapped. It seems likely that someone is up to

no good.

Blount wants to find the answers to these questions. He starts out on his journey by boarding a flying ship destined for Mount Foliandre. While Blount takes a nap, the ship starts being bombarded by large rocks making holes in the hull! Even though the captain and the crew of the ship tried to ywake him up, Blount would not stir. It's going down and Blount must find a way off. There is one remaining parachute on deck sitting on the corner of one of the ship's wings. It's not going to be that simple, though. As Blount reaches for it, the tip of the wing gets hit by a rock and breaks off leaving Blount in a seri-



When Blount talks with other goblins, he will translate the conversation for you.



Blount needs Chump the parrot to help him get the dragon to remember his promise.

ous dilemma. There are other objects left on board, including Chump the parrot, and it is up to you to help Blount figure out how to use them together to get safely on the ground.

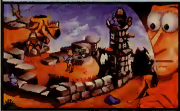
This is where Blount's adventure begins. If you are successful, Blount will next be on the ground where many of King Bodd's guards are. You soon discover that they are holding Wynonna prisoner and Blount immediately falls in love with her. He must get rid of all the guards to save Wynonna. But King Bodd is not that easily beaten. He sics his wolf on Blount who gets torn apart. Blount then realizes he is dead. Now he must get back to the

## FOREIGN GAMES, AMERICAN SHORES

As the gaming market in the United States begins to grow, companies from abroad will naturally want their share. Possibly because of the lower PC prices in this country, the presence more gamers in general, or whatever countless reasons, game imports are on a steady rise.

More and more foreign companies are finding American distributors to sell their product and reach the American consumer. Of course, foreign companies have one problem to contend with if they want to cross their borders, namely, the language barrier. Manuals have to be written in two, three, and sometimes more languages. Any speech will have to be redone in different tongues. At the present, the primary markets for PC games can be found in the U.S., France, Great Britain, Japan, Australia, and Germany.

Most well known among the European



Goblins Quest 3 is a family entertainment game made by a French company.

companies are Coktel Vision, distributed in the United States by Sierra On-Line, Infogrames, the makers of the Alone in the Dark series and Delphine, the company responsible for creating Out of This World and Flashback. Best known of all, of course, are the Russian designers of Tetris. Other companies, Domark, Virgin Games, U.S. Gold, Ocean and Psygnosis, for example, have strong ties to Europe while Koei and Megatech are both based in Japan.

Often, there is a significant lag time between the European release and the American release. Often, this leads to American perception that the European and overseas designers and programmers are not as advanced or as talented as American software designers. Keeping in mind that the difference in release dates is sometimes as much as two years or more, however, proves this to be incorrect. Some of the aforementioned games are examples of this. Out of This World and Alone in the Dark and Realms of Arkania: Blade of Destiny were released in Europe far in advance of the American release. Often, the reason for this is that the game needs to be translated into English. The time lag is often the same length as translating the game from one operating system to another.

-- Goblins Quest 3 is produced by a French company called Coktel Vision, and is dis-

tributed by Sierra.

-- Nigel Mansell's World Championship is a formula one racing simulator made by an English company called Gremlin. They have just recently found a distributor in this country with Suncom. Suncom, of course, is well known as a controller designer and hardware manufacturer.

-- Freelancer, Raiden and Evolution, all soon to be released, have all been developed by Imagitec Design, the company that created the role-playing game Daemons-gate.

-- The Realms of Arkania series, a German role-playing game system, published in the United States by Sir-Tech Software will be released later this year.



Alone in the Dark II is a French adventure game with nice, fluid graphics.

world of the living. He is now possessed with a werewolf curse and changes when he sees the moon. The curse, you will find, is not so much of a curse, and will help Blount do some things that he couldn't do as himself. Werewolves are much stronger and agile than Goblins.

The game is structured like many Sierra games, but with a simpler interface. First of all, each level consists of one to three screens. Blount must often get objects from an adjacent screen to use in another one.



**The Colossus won't stop catapulting rocks at passing ships from his sky fortress.**

The screen is covered with important objects that are designated as hot spots. Their description appears when the cursor is moved over them. Any place or thing that is a hot spot will eventually be used at some time or another, usually together with something or someone else. If you get stuck, you'll have to go through the ritual of tediously "using" everything in your inventory on every spot that has not been used. Two items in your inventory cannot be used on each other, as is common, limiting the possible courses of action. If you still can't figure it out, you have five "jokers" that will give you clues.

Though the jokers do give you clues for the completed solution, the clues usually only tell you *what* you have to do, but not necessarily all of the details on *how* to do it. Keep in mind, though, that you only get five, and there is no legitimate way around it. Even restoring a previously saved game will not restore a used joker, so it makes sense to keep them for the later and more difficult levels.

Secondly, in some screens other characters will appear to assist Blount. Though they can't carry items, they can help through their actions. Sometimes they can do or reach things that Blount cannot. Other times you must coordinate the character's actions with Blount's to complete a certain task. For instance, Fulbert the boa constrictor must swing one chandelier so that Blount can swing from another one to it. If it is standing still he cannot reach it. Timing in this kind of task is critical. Switching between Blount and the other character is as easy as

clicking on one or the other. Also, the switch can be made while one of them is in the middle of performing a task.

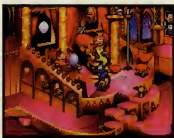
Lastly, along with extra large hot spots there is an easy to use interface. To access the control panel along the top of the screen, just move the mouse cursor in that area. The control panel consists of six icons: Game Management (save, restore, quit.) Jokers, Goblins News, Inventory, Map, and Options (music on/off, date, time, time spent on game.)

*Goblins News* shows you the cover page of each edition giving a summary of what's happening in Goblin world, and will sometimes provide a brief clue on the goal of that screen.

The Map gives a view of the entire world and marks all of the places that Blount will visit in his adventure, and his current location. Clicking on the map will tell you what your goal is on the screen Blount is currently at.

The Inventory icon is unnecessary since you can call it up by clicking the right button. If Blount is holding an object, right clicking will make him drop it or put it back in his inventory. Right clicking again will open up the inventory window.

As you can see, the interface is easy enough for an older child to use, making *Goblins 3* conducive to family entertainment. The puzzles, though, are probably a bit too difficult for a youngster to figure out alone. Also, actions that require coordinating Blount and another character in a timely manner might need an adult's mouse skills. There is no question, though, that kids would get a big kick out of the sounds, graphics, and animations.



**Queen Xine needs to get something back from King Radd before she'll see him.**

The puzzles in the game are very well done and creative. Though not too difficult, some required quite a bit of ingenuity to accomplish. On one level, Blount must stop the Colossus from catapulting the rocks that are bombarding passing flying ships. The Colossus is lying in a hammock that is tied to a column at one end. In an adjacent screen, Blount used his golf club with a

worm to fish up a sawfish. When he tries to use the sawfish on the column, the Colossus triggers a cage that falls on Blount trapping him. Fortunately, Ooya the sage is with Blount and uses his magic skills to detach and free Blount's shadow. You now control the shadow as if it were Blount himself.

Another clever part is in the Alchemist's lab. Blount needs to concoct a couple of elixirs, but instead of *him* appearing in the screen his hands leave his arms, and they are what you control. The left hand is used simply for manipulating things, and the right for picking things up and moving them around. Thus, you sometimes have to coordinate the hands' movements to accomplish certain tasks.

As good as the puzzles are, most of the sounds are somewhat annoying. When Blount speaks with someone you hear



**Blount grew wings from the flybkr that he made in the alchemists workshop.**

Goblin gibberish, and then Blount appears in a close up window to translate. It seems that because the game was created by Coktel Vision, a French company, some of the speech gets mixed up in the translation, though it is not completely incomprehensible. Most annoying, though, are the sound effects, particularly the sounds the characters make while they are not being used. You can turn the music off but not the sounds. If you choose to turn your speakers down, you might miss some important speech.

If you don't mind the goblins theme and are a fan of puzzle/adventure games of this kind, or you already liked *Goblins 1* and *2*, *Goblins 3* is enjoyable. If you are looking for something you can play with your kids that you will all enjoy, this is especially a good choice. You won't get bored while your kids have all the fun, and because of the simple interface, kids can participate in the control and not have to just sit back and watch.

It does not seem like an easy task to produce a game that would be entertaining for every family member regardless of their age. *Goblins 3* may be just that.

--Tasos Kalafas



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# Morphing Made Easy!

**Transform Into Any Hairy Thing You Want in Origin's ShadowCaster.**

In all the role playing games you've played or heard of has the primary attribute been the ability to shapeshift? One maybe? Origin has released ShadowCaster on compact disk with enhancements. These enhancements include digitized voice and some added cinematic sequences, which add a nice touch to a good game.

Your character, Shadowcaster, can morph into different life forms each with its own unique abilities and weaknesses. It is with these life forms you will battle the evil guys (what a concept!).

## Isn't That Special!

The story of your people, called The People, is a tale of soaring to wondrous heights, only to hit really hard when the ride is over. The

People had the gift of morphing and used the life forms abilities to

build a magnificent civilization. All citizens had the chance to be



No matter what you do or where you go these days those darn lava golems seem to be just about everywhere. Don't they ever learn?



granted the morphing gift, all except for those deemed not worthy. This created a whole subclass of non-morphing outcasts and of course, they resent the shapeshifters.

These outcasts were approached by a bad god, Veste, and were promised power and morphing abilities in exchange for their loyalty to him. The only thing was in order for the outcasts to morph they had to perform hideous rituals in which their victims, animals and people, were tortured to death and their form stolen.

When Veste felt ready, he made his move to take over and the The People were thrown into a bitter civil war. Even though Veste and his followers were routed and imprisoned, the gods were not pleased with how The People used their morphing gift. Over the years, The People degenerated and soon lost the ability to morph. All but one: Kirt.

Kirt was whisked away to another plane as a baby to be raised in safety under the watchful eye of Grandfather. Kirt became an all-American boy with a fondness for the martial arts. His ability to kick is the Shadow-Caster's only fighting attribute in the human form.

But wouldn't you know it! Veste's evil minions locate Kirt and grandfather sends him back home. Once there, Kirt as the Shadow-Caster is propelled into battles which take place on several different planes.

## A Bohe in Morphland.

Once the game begins you find yourself in Garden Ruins and right off the bat, you've got to fight for your silicon life. You'll see a boleth come charging at you. There is nothing else to do but fight him. You do this by making sure that one hand or the other is highlighted with a left click. The game screen cursor becomes a targeting reticle. To throw a punch just right click. In this case, lay it on with those right clicks. You can also zip over to the foot icon, left click,



target and right click to lay some "sole" on the beastie.

You do not have the ability to morph at this time. You gain life forms by touching the obelisks which are scattered through the game. Once you've defeated the boleth, it's



time to explore, and in this particular area, it doesn't take long. Just in the adjoining room you'll find some inventory items and the first obelisk. Touch the obelisk and you'll see an icon of the new metamorph located in the bottom right hand corner, just underneath the inventory area. It won't be long before you'll need his form!

## Pick A Body, Any Body!

There are six metamorphs you will gain during the course of the game. They are: Maorin, Caun, Opsis, Kahpa, Ssair, and Grost.

Each metamorph will have to be used in specific instances, but you can use any form as your primary walk about and fight form. This adds a non-linear dimension to Shadowcaster and adds a touch of replay value.

The first metamorph is the Maorin, a six foot tall, six-armed cat. The 400 pound Maorin does everything better than a human and has a special sight ability.

Next will come the Caun, a two-foot tall and 40 pound humanoid. This will be the form you'll want to take to heal. You can heal by standing still, but as a human it takes a long time. As a Caun, the healing process zips right along almost doing away with the need for healing potions.



**Happiness is crushing your enemies, driving them before you and hearing the lamentations of their women, or so say real true life heroes.**

A note though, you can only regain your power points in your human form.

The Caun is a fun form to use when fighting big creatures like mud or lava golems. They shoot right over the top of your head. By the time you meet the golems, you should have a special Caun sword and you can just stand face to ankle with them and whack away!

The next form will be the Opsis. They are a race of large floating eyes with tentacles. They have the ability to cast magical spells, such as cold blast and magic missiles. Also the Opsis has a special autopap feature. While activated, the special autopap will show you unmapped areas.

It won't be long, though, before you'll gain the frogman, or Kahpa metaform. They will get some use



**Zap these flying skeleton heads with the bombs you'll find scattered about.**

as there are a couple of underwater areas you'll need to fight your way into and out of.

Then along comes a fun form—the Ssair. This form is a flying dragon-like form. They are very tough fighters and can breathe fire.

Last, but not least, is the Grost. This race is kin to The Thing in the Fantastic Four. They can't be hurt with physical attacks and just by stomping their foot can cause an earthquake. This attribute is particularly useful if there's a room full of skeletons you don't want to fool with. One stomp and they fall to pieces.

All the metaforms use power points to maintain and they use power points to enable their special attributes. In a couple of places this will become critical, but otherwise, the forms and the attributes can be used at will.



**When you've got deadly claws, a tail that can inflict special attribute damages and fire breathing capabilities, take no guff!**

## On With The Game.

Once you've obtained the Maorin metaform, now would be a good time to save. Then step onto the teleporter, which is the major method of getting around. You'll find yourself in the continuation of the Garden Ruins. Here you'll encounter deadly fighting strawberries, called Floro.

After you dispatch some of them along with a boeth or two, you'll encounter some locked gates. Keep searching this area and soon you will find a variety of things to do.

Keep on the look out for a shuriken. You'll need that weapon often, but in this plane, you'll need it to take some glowing disks you'll find. These disks are evil and need to be destroyed. Once the disks are gone you will be attacked by the

super boeths. But if you are in the Maorin form, you should be able to take care of them. As always, though, save your game early and often. When you come upon any chests in the game, just strike them with a weapon. In this plane you can use the shuriken. Just keep using the shuriken and soon the chest will shatter and you'll find a goody. After some more explorations and battles, find the teleporter and begin the second level of play. By the way, you can pick up the squashed strawberries and replant them. It won't be hard to figure out where and why. Secondly, if you complete the level without a statue's head in your possession, you'll need to continue your level explorations and find it. You'll need it later on and it wouldn't be much fun re-tracing your steps.



**Ah, the gentle boeth. It's the perfect lap beast and is known to be good with children. When you see one, try singing to it and see what happens.**





The final battle means you'll have to fight and dispatch each of Veste's forms.

## Swimming With Ceiling Stalkers.

Once you've teleported back to the Garden Ruins, all there is to do is to find the teleporter which will take you to the next plane. Just as a matter of note; you will be using some levels over again as the staging area for other levels, so don't be surprised to find yourself back on a completed level.

It is here in the Flooded Palace in which you will be up to your waist in water and under attack by the ceiling



The triskelion is a Greek symbol of health, strength and virility.

stalkers. You can attack them with the shuriken or there is a way to drain the level. If you fight, though, you will increase your score and if you decide to do so, lead them into an open area so you can continually keep on the move just out of their range. You'll die quick if you try to go toe to toe with whatever they've got in a pitched battle. It is on this level you will find some much needed armor



Ceiling Stalkers: yuck! You can't swing your weapon when you're up to your neck, so either run away or use the handy shuriken you found earlier.

and magical weapons. Give the items to the Maorin. The armor becomes enabled just by having it in inventory. Then boogie on around the level and teleport out. You'll be back at the Garden Ruins. Immediately step on the next teleporter. When you materialize it will be in the Misty Ruins. This level is large and complex. Watch for the introduction of some new sneaky denizens to dispatch and since there is no autopap features in ShadowCaster it would be a good idea to keep track of where you've been and where you need to go. Another tidbit is that when a skeleton is standing still, they become more resistant to your melee attacks, so keep them moving and you'll be able to take them out pronto. From here the whole game lies at your fingertips.

## Let's Not Morph Words Here.

ShadowCaster is a fine game with good graphics, an easy to use interface, a unique storyline and a better than average romping good time. The new cinematic additions provide a nice touch in game play by providing more atmosphere than the original version. The game is not so complicated that you will need to expended tons of gray cells on it, but it does provide some good challenges. This would be a great game for new to the genre or younger gamers who find some other RPG's much too difficult.

**-Steven Greenlee**



The battles are over and you get to take your bows before all the adoring people, but it never fails—grandpa becomes a public embarrassment!



# ***Never Say Scuttle!***

**Command a Task Force to Victory in Great Naval Battles II from SSI.**

If you go down to your local software retailer you will probably find a number of military simulations to choose from. This makes it difficult to choose the right one for you. Most have general criteria in mind of what they want. Some like great graphics and sounds, others have to have good AI, while many want excessive realism and control. By picking up and looking at the box, they'll probably all look good. That, of course, is a risky method of choosing where to spend your hard earned money.

Well, that's why we make gaming mags like this one, right? If you're looking to try your hand at a World War II naval battle simulator, Great Naval Battles Vol. II might be right for you. In a nut shell, it has great graphics and sound, a simple interface, and an intelligent enough AI.

The start up screen offers you a menu to jump right into a scenario, or watch recorded footage of past battles. The "tapes" are made while you are on top of a

ship's Lookout Station. After you choose the Scenario option you can pick what dif-

ficulty level to play at. The levels are Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced, and



**From the ship's bridge you watch as your fleet burns the midnight oil hoping to surprise the enemy before they can spot you at dawn.**



**Visit the Gunner's Station and take over a turret, or just give out orders to the crew.**

Expert. The levels vary the advantage the computer opponent will have in materials, rate of fire, and accuracy. Regardless of your aptitude for naval sims, it probably would not be a bad idea to start at the beginner level. It is not so easy that the opponent will roll over and die, but it will let you live long enough to get a feel for the controls. After that you can choose if you want to control the Allied or Axis side.

Next, you need to decide what scenario to try. The introductory one is a basic cruiser vs. cruiser confrontation in the middle of the day. The two ships start about 18,000 yards apart. Click on GO and the melee begins. Since they are already within range of each other, they waste no time firing off a few spot rounds. From here you can pick up any of the controls you want.

The interface is well laid out and easy to learn. By clicking the right mouse button or hitting the escape key a Menu Bar appears across the top of the screen. The first menu is called Files where you can save or quit your game. The next one is Controls. From here you can turn sounds or music on or off, and select which types of messages you want to receive, for which ships you want to receive them, whether they will be accompanied by sound, and whether game time will automatically pause or delay briefly while you read them. There are also controls here for pausing and adjusting the game time speed, but they can be accessed more easily along the bottom Control Bar.

One of the most used menus is the list of Stations. From here you move to different stations within the active ship, or to the Flag Ship. The different stations are the Ship Bridge, Main Gun Control, Secondary Gun



**Show the crew how you became an admiral and take hold of the torpedo controls.**



**This naval simulator allows you to command surface attacks, send air ops from the flight deck of an air craft carrier, or plan an attack from a base.**

Control, Torpedo, Air Ops, Damage, and Lookout. These will be examined closer in a little bit. The next one is the Reports Menu where you can get information about the ships in your command, yours and the opponents victory status, weather and visibility conditions, and upcoming reinforcements.

The last menu is Briefings. Here, you can get background information on the major



**Perched atop the ship is the ship you can see the silhouettes of passing ships.**

naval and naval/air weapons systems used in the South Pacific.

In all of the scenarios except the introductory one you will be commanding a task force. Therefore, when you start a scenario you will start on the bridge of the flag ship. This station is similar to a ship's bridge with a few differences, and the fact that you control the whole fleet and not just one individual ship.

The Control Bar along the bottom of the Flag Ship Bridge screen has buttons for the Map, Cargo, Fuel, Nav, Ships, Contacts, and Air Ops. The pop up panels for each are categorically displayed. The Map window takes up about two-thirds of the screen. Along the bottom of the Map there is a narrow space for the Cargo or Fuel panels. The remainder is for the Nav, Ships, Contacts, and Air Ops.

The Navigation Panel is where you control

the speed and heading of a task force, and the orders of each individual ship. To take control, all you have to do is switch from Auto to Manual. The course can be controlled manually, or orders can be given. The available orders are Follow, Intercept, Patrol Box, Patrol Line, Plot Course, Return to Base, and Shadow. This panel also controls the smoke screen, and provides some other general information about the task force.

The Ships panel lists all the ships in the task force, the task force's mission, orders, formation, whether to hold or fire weapons when ready, and detach a ship from the group.

The Contacts panel lists any ships that have been spotted and/or identified, and gives a report about the contact such as its speed, heading, etc.

The Air Ops panel gives you information about and generalized control over the air operations of the Combat Air Patrol and Search aircraft of the currently selected task force or airbase.

The control panel of an individual ship's bridge has the same map, cargo, and fuel panels as provided on the Flag Bridge, and the Nav panel is identical as well. The remaining



**From the Lookout Station enemy shells will splash sea water in your face. Refreshing!**

buttons are different. On a ship's bridge, there is a button for Air Ops, Damage, Guns, and Torps. The Nav panel cannot be used, though, unless the ship is detached from the task force.

The Air Ops panel gives you information about available aircraft and formations. From here you can see the ready time for the plane(s), and choose a formation for them, if necessary. The hangar capacity for each aircraft is listed, as is the launch capacity, and number of planes in the hangar.

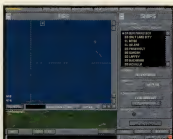
The Damage panel is one you will be visiting if you hear a loud explosion that is not followed by a splash. It is the first sign that a shell has hit the ship. the damage panel



**Assign Damage Control teams to plug holes, pump water, or put out fires.**

will tell you the list of the ship (if it's leaning from flooding), and the status of the Damage Control teams and Pumps. There is also a Scuttle button that will hopefully never have to be used (sink the ship deliberately to keep it from falling into enemy hands).

The Gunnery panel allows you to set target 1 and 2, its status, and shows how much ammo remains along with information



**Watch the battle from high above the action, or zoom in to take a closer look.**

about the gunnery directors and guns.

Finally, the Torpedo panel gives information about the mounts, like how many tubes at each, their status, how many are loaded and how many reloads there are.

These panels contain general information and controls as if you were aboard the bridge of the ship. Get your hands dirty by switching to the different stations. The stations can be accessed from the Stations menu along the menu bar, but are also assigned to keys F1 through F8. At each station you again can decide how much control you want to take. For instance, at the Gunnery Station you can simply get specific information, change the kinds of shells that are being fired (High Explosive, Armor Piercing, or Star Shell illumination rounds,) how they are being fired (full, loose, narrow, spot, or hold,) or take control of a turret yourself.

For the most part, the Torpedo Station is the same except you get the controls directly without going to a substation. Basically, the stations let you get more involved or see more detail as to the operations of the ship. The Lookout Station gives you the ability of

a 360 degree view and to zoom in on the action. There is also a recorder that will let you make "tapes" of the battles.

Lastly, the Map window gives you a bird's eye view of the area. A 10,000 yard per square grid can be overlaid, as can "filters" that will draw a circle showing the radius of visibility, gun fire, torpedoes, etc. The ships on the water are color coded, but if you zoom in all the way you can actually see the ship's deck on fire, or the splashes of water and shells landing around it, or torpedoes as they zip through the water.

Two of the most attractive features of the game are its sharp SVGA graphics and explosive sounds. For those who are often intimidated by military simulators, GNB Vol.2 does a nice job of appealing to a vast group of gamers. The AI is good enough that leaving the majority of your ship set to automatic does not mean your mission is doomed from the start. Also, a stop and go



**The statistics of your task force will be shown to help you prepare.**

button is conveniently located so that you can pause the action while you plan out your next move. Speeding up game time is convenient, as well, from 1x to 4x. If you really wanted, you could climb into a turret, fire off a round, and get up to the Lookout Station to see it land.

There are enough scenarios to keep you busy for a while, especially if you try them under different difficulty levels. One thing that might have made the game more interesting would have been the recording of players and their accomplishments, like getting medals for completed mission, and the like. The points that you get for successfully completing a scenario are not very meaningful since they are not carried over to show your performance in the game overall.

GNB Vol.2 might be the perfect naval simulator for those who want graphics and sounds worth the CD medium they are in, and want to be able to control as much of the action as they feel without the AI running a ship aground, so to speak.



**These mighty vessels and their crew fought valiantly in the Pacific to finally put an end to World War II and free the world of the Axis invasion.**

*-Tasos Kafafas*

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# Be Young, Drink Blood!

**SSI's Favorite Vampire Comes Alive Via CD-ROM!**

There is a place where greed, lust, and avarice dwell. No, not in Washington, D.C., but in Ravenloft. The popular SSI world comes to the PC packed on a CD-ROM that adventuring gamers hope will be the game that knock their socks off. Well, keep your clothes on, nothing like that is going to happen.

The first thing you have to do before sitting down with Ravenloft is to reign in your frustration level, because this game will try to take it to new heights. When you begin to install you'll find that the game will not find itself compatible with the Pro Audio Spectrum sound card.

The rest of the install will go smoothly as it's putting some 20 meg on your hard drive. Next is something most RPG'ers can get through easily-character creations.

A Vistani gypsy will deal you some cards and you begin the process of

creating your characters. You will only create two, so choose careful-



Fly, bite, drink blood and be gloomy is the golden rule of Strahd's vacation paradise. Make your travel reservations now!





One minute you're questing for Lord Dhelt and the next it's a whole new hellgame.

ly. You will pick up NPC's during the game, but as always, you don't know how long they'll be with you. Also your NPC's cannot use most weapons inside buildings or dungeons. This is because the thinking is that the last two characters are behind the first two, therefore they cannot swing weapons. They can throw knives and a fighter can use a halberd. The thinking again is that they can use these weapons by reaching over the top of the front two characters. Is it just me or is this fractured logic?

After you create the permanent characters you will begin game play. The introduction features digitized

voice and some very graphics. The scenes with Lord Dhelt are sharp and hold a promise of stunning visuals. This promise, though, holds truest in the cinematic clips, while dungeoneering the monsters and rooms and stuff digress. The game options allow you sharpen floors, ceilings, and walls individually, but if you enable these sharpening options it really begins to bog down character movement, and there is already a movement problem. Even though I played the game on a 486-DX66 with all kinds of accelerators, memory, and a



Some of the people you meet in Barovia are very, very pale.



Just because a monster is a little bit thin doesn't mean it's wimpy.

double speed CD, there were many times the game was accessing so hard that it seemingly was accessing the CD, and the hard drive at the same time and was trying to access the hard drive and CD in a neighboring machine! This bogging down almost gets extreme, especially if you enable any of the game's enhancers. If you want the game to run at a barely acceptable rate, turn everything off! What you lose most are sharp monster graphics (lament). You can turn on the Sprite Dithering option which will better focus monsters, but again you'll sacrifice something to game speed.

## The Blood Beasts of Barovia: Ravenloft's Bestiary of Evil

**Doom Guards:** Arcane enchanted suits of armor once armed do 1-8 points of damage (rarely up to 10 pts).

**Gargoyles:** Animated roof spouts of twisted animal and human forms. These winged creatures get four attacks per round.

**Darklings:** A Vistani gypsy outcast who sometimes uses poisoned-tipped weapons.

**Broken Ones:** Human scientific and magical experiments gone wrong. Inhabiting dense woods and rocky wastelands they can inflict 1-6 points of damage.

**Ghouls:** Undead human flesh eaters who attack with filthy nails and biting with fangs. A mere Ghoul touch can paralyze for several rounds.

**Ghasts:** Worse than their Ghoul brothers, ghasts can paralyze elves and affect others for longer periods of time.

**Ghoul Lord:** Like the other undead,

the ghoul lord strikes for 1-6 points of damage with its claws and 1-10 points with its bite. Also their bite inflicts victims with a slow rotting disease.

**Goblyns:** Again magically transformed humans with bloated heads and red glowing eyes. Each claw attack does 1-6 points damage, but if both claws hit at the same time, the goblin scores a ferocious bite on your neck.

**Bone Golem:** A creation of bones from defeated skeletons who can do 3-24 points of damage with each successful claw attack. Their hideous laugh can cause paralysis or death.

**Groaning Spirit:** This is a banshee, usually the spirit of an evil female elf. These floating phantasms glow at night and become transparent in light. Once per day a banshee wail carries a killing power.

**Living Walls:** A section of brick looking evil containing the heads, hands, feet, and broken bones of any creature dying within 100 yards of the wall. Once breached, all the absorbed

creatures strike simultaneously.

**Evil Treants:** Corrupted by the evil contained in water, these "trees" do 2-24 points of damage with just one attack from their powerful branches.

**Worgs:** Evil wolves who grow to the size of ponies and can be used as mounts for goblyns.

**Female Vampires:** Often encountered in the Svalch Woods, these life draining undead stalks the living without mercy.

**Inquisitor:** An undead abomination of partially rotted flesh whose very being is dangerous to all it encounters. It can use a whip and inflict horrible diseases with just a scratch. It also has a paralyzing gaze. Usually they are found only in torture chambers.

There are many other creatures which lurk in the land of Barovia and of course, they all do Count Strahd Von Zarovich's bidding. Are you still sure you want to enter into the world that is Ravenloft?

## The Game Is Afoot.

Once the introduction is finished and you are given a quest by Lord Dhelt, you chase down the assassin. After a pitched battle, you recover the items stolen, but, as Ravenloft aficionados know, a mysterious fog rolls in and your party is transported to that vacation hotspot-Barovia.

You will see a ruin in front of you so take a gamble, explore it. You will find a deathbed parchment which will help set the atmosphere of Ravenloft: Strahd's Possession. There is a trap door and so it will be no surprise that you'll explore the basement before moving on. You'll find some inventory items down



Those darn worgs are just everywhere complicating everything-go figure!

below. Next you'll be ready to leave the ruins, but you may not want to be in too big a hurry to leave. Worgs are on the prowl and if you try to fight them out in the open you're gonna die a thousand deaths. As with many RPG's, bait the worgs, fight them from the ruin's entrance; that way they can't gang up on you and you can fight them one at a



When the worgs attack they will circle before charging: fight them from the entrance to the ruins for best results.

time. After the first wave of worgs there will be more, so it would be wise to stay close to the ruins for just a few rounds of fighting until you have cleared most of the worgs (or other sundry bad animals) from the immediate area.

Then there will be a NPC out in the forest you'll need to speak to and then it's on to the road to the Village of Barovia.

## Follow The Yellow Brick Road.

The road to the village is not so much yellow as blood-soaked red. You will be attacked by worgs and highwaymen. Take your time and have your cure spells ready and you should have little trouble making it to the village. Once there you can begin searching. You will find some sparsely littered inventory items

and seemingly no one who will talk with you. Have patience, because there are a couple of villagers who you can converse with. That includes one ghost. Ravenloft: Strahd's Possession is now becoming a quest driven game. The back-sliding paladin will give you a quest; the ghost will give you a quest; Strahd will give you a quest, but with all these quests, you'll need to note what you are supposed to do, where, when, and how. There are no automatic quest note taking features here.



Interrogative encounters with NPC's are non-linear.

## Pardon Me But My Teeth Are In Your Neck!

It won't take long before you get an invitation to join Count Von Zarovich for (not as) dinner and well, the rest of the game lies at your beckon call.

Game interface leaves a lot to be desired, but the graphics hold up and the story should suffice for a few hours of play. It is not a game failure, but some of it's idiosyncrasies are more frustrating than necessary.

-Steven Greenlee



Whenever you look at this face you just gotta say to yourself, "Now this is a handsome man."

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# She's T-R-O-U-B-L-E!

**American Laser Games Asks Who Shot Johnny Rock?**

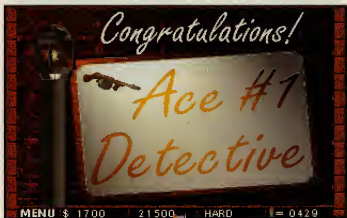
Private Eye: the name conjures up images of a hard drinking and fighting, fedora wearing, sailor swearing flatfoot from the 1930's and 40's. When this setting is used it can be a work of art like the Dashiell Hammett novels or movies like "The Maltese Falcon". But when the genre is used and they're bad, *they're bad!*

Another thing; since the genre has been around so long, it's fair game for use as humor, camp, and satire. Rarely does the genre do well under these circumstances. Who Shot Johnny Rock? falls under the category of campy. So, does it work or fail? Because the emphasis is on an arcade target game, there's not much in story, so Johnny Rock succeeds.

Following up on their Mad Dog McCree shooter, American Laser Games has again put out a decent

arcade game on CD-ROM. As a matter of fact, the game program-

ming takes up the entire compact disk, some 500 meg! Of course,



Besides knowing you put a bad guy/gal away, you're professionalism is reaffirmed with the very last screen of the game.



**Your secretary calls you, but how does she know which booth you're in?**

most of that space is dedicated to the video clips which are used extensively throughout the game. Now the video is not picture perfect. It's more pixelated and fuzzy than maybe what you might expect. But, the fuzziness adds to the campy atmosphere of the game and adds to the challenge of successfully targeting a bad guy and "rubbing him out".

Another nice thing is that just a few thousand bytes are needed on your hard drive in order to play the game. This is much more acceptable than a lot of CD-ROM games coming out that still needs 10/20 even 30 meg on the hard drive. After a simple and quick install you're ready to find

out who shot Johnny Rock.

## Long Cool Woman In A Red Dress

It was a day like most other days, until she walks into the office. That walk, that talk, you knew right off the bat she spelled trouble with a capital "T". And so begins your hunt. The woman in red tells you the story of Johnny Rock and how he came to an end in a hail of gunfire. Keeping true to trouble following this woman around, you'll soon have to defend yourself.

After the woman in red, the next



**Lockjaw will can't open her mouth so she let's her trigger finger do the talkin'.**



**No grandiose claims here, but simple arcade fun via the CD-ROM.**

person through the door is a messenger boy. Funny, he's going to try to deliver the telegram via a bullet. Think quick and aim true or you're a goner.

The woman in red will continue her story, but then soon there after two more people enter your office. One of these guys will try to plug you, while the other really is a flower delivery boy. Now, if you shoot the wrong people, you'll have to start over (from where you last saved). One of the things I like about this game is that if you do start again, your target may switch. Yes, there is a random factor involved here, so at least Johnny Rock is not totally linear.

## FUTURE SHOCK: WHAT TO DO WITH THE CD-ROM?

Just about everywhere you look these days they're talking about CD-ROM. They being hardware sales people, software sales people, software designers, and intellectual types who just talk about what everybody else is doing. It is an exciting time and like usual we end users will allow ourselves to be led down any path which industry people leads us. That's okay to a large extent, but with all the talk of game violence and censorship maybe gamers (and the industry as a whole) can save themselves some grief by peering ahead and deciding if we like what we see.

What brought all this on was the review on this page, *Who Shot Johnny Rock*? This simple and non-offensive game uses the capabilities of CD-ROM to allow a gamer to play an arcade shooter using live person digitized video. Will digitized live action lead to a future where PC games contain the same hotly debated graphic violence which is now raging among the video gaming industry?

Also, will the less costly video gaming trends of graphically violent

games, which is dominated by young people, overrun the PC market, where the game players still tend to be older and use their computers for more than just playing games? The CD-ROM will make it easy to produce a *Who Shot Johnny Rock*? game that contains explicit and graphic violence, thus changing the PC market, which still is really more strategic kinds of play rather than splatter action.

Sure, there are point and shoot games for the PC, but the level of realism is more fantastic than two humans fighting for survival in a death sport arena. Again, society has to decide what it will accept or not in its' entertainment. It should never be the government's right to legislate morals based on fear and hysteria, but it would help if game producers voluntarily dictate a moderate philosophy concerning violence. In these virgin years of CD-ROM development producers and users can take the lead in paving a path of acceptable gaming content. That can be done by simply deciding if you

would you rather see *Who Shot Johnny Rock* with graphic violence or in it's simpler form of an arcade target game.

Now all this talk about games almost seems much ado about nothing, but then we make a lot out of nothing in this country. If claims and campaigns are not countered, the fringes of our society will push through laws or regulations, which are just as repressive, that infringe upon rights of ordinary people.

All of this and more is the subplot of the gaming industry as a whole. While it will not consume an inordinate of time for the ordinary gamer, it doesn't hurt to take notice of the things which will impact our freedom to choose what and how we will play a game. At least when the need arises to circle the wagons and hold off a censorship attack, it can be done with the least amount of effort and time.

Is the promise of CD-ROM fuel for moralizing censors? Let's nip that in the bud as soon as possible.

-sdg



**Shooting the screaming woman may make you feel better, but don't do it!**

After you take care of the fake flower boy, a couple more of the boys will appear on the stairs just outside your window. The first one will jump through the window. You'll need to start shooting as soon as you see him. If you wait until he

street map which automatically pops up. So where do you go first? Well, you'll have to experiment with different locations to see. If you click on a location, say the casino, and you keep getting killed no matter what you do, that probably means that is not the location to go to. So try another. This is a very good reason to save your games at the map screen. Deeper into the game you can save in mid-location, but keeping a map save before a new location just in case is a prudent thing to do.

All the suspects you'll meet are named after diseases, and mostly skin diseases at that. There's Mumps, Pox, Measles, and the Lockjaw Jill. Johnny Rock had the goods on one of them and that person killed him because of it.

only if you have money. It's during this mode of game play you'll want to save often, because you'll be playing the same scene over a few times before getting it right. Also, if you're having trouble hitting the guy or gal, try firing in a vertical motion. Start high and move downward, that'll help.

All in all, *Who Shot Johnny Rock* is an simple enjoyable game and there is some, albeit limited, replay value here. It's also the kind of game you can keep around to show people because it's simple to load, use and play, it's visually acceptable and it's entertaining.

Hopefully, there will be more of this type of game coming from American Laser Games.

**-Steven Greenlee**



**In this picture we see a bad guy practicing his double half gainer with a triple twist tuck. All this was made possible by a well placed "Incentive" from your Tammy gun!**

assumes a firing position, he'll nail you every time. After that it's off into the real world to track down Johnny Rock's killer. Wait until you meet the suspects.

## **Introducing Pox, Measles, and Lockjaw Jill.**

After the introduction you will plan you next move from a city

Before you can talk to any of the suspects you'll have to fight your way through their henchmen. After you've talked with them, they'll give you a clue to the combination of Johnny Rock's safe. In that safe will be a clue pointing to the person Johnny Rock was blackmailing. It's that simple. Well, it is that simple if you play in the "wimp" mode. There are two other modes: easy and hard. Hard is a challenge. If you don't zero in exactly, you'll be dying a lot. You can be fixed up by the Doctor, but



**Be ready to draw and fire your "piece" in case it's not a real baby!**



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## HARLECH CASTLE



# It's Good to be the King

**Win the Pope's Favor in Castles II: Siege and Conquest by Interplay.**

Running for political office involves convincing the citizens that you are the person who can fulfill their needs. As a candidate you must travel to different regions listening to the people and making promises that you must pledge to keep. If you are convincing and in tune, the votes will be there on election day.

In 14th century France, becoming king was a little different than running for office in a democratic nation, but there are some similarities. Placed in a tumultuous period in European history, marked by the prolonged conflict of The Hundred Years War, many barons sought to win the favor of the Pope to be crowned king. In *Castles II: Siege and Conquest*, you do the same. Your mission is to unite the territories of the mythical land of Bretagne and eventually become king. It is a formidable task, one that will require you to manage the three primary areas of your government: Administrative, Military, and Political.

At the start of the game, you must

## WARWICK CASTLE



**You can choose from ten different actual castle designs to build as your own, which can then be modified or used as they are.**



The different colors represent the different lords that are trying to rule the land.

choose the player whose role you wish to assume. The map of Bretagne is divided into territories and you start in the one marked by your colored crest. The others are yet to be identified since you have not discovered who occupies them. The crest not only identifies the ruler by color, but also shows at a glance what commodity the region contains and if there is a castle there. If there is a 'T' it means the territory contains Timber, a 'G' stands for Gold, an 'I' for Iron, and 'F' for Food. If no ruler has taken it, the region will not have a crest but only the commodity code, and will be designated as neutral.

Neutral territories are ripe for the picking and should be taken advantage of at the outset since they can't defend themselves well. Although doing so may anger the Pope and possibly another player, there is plenty of time to work at building good relations. The biggest asset from getting a new region into your possession is the commodity it contains. Ideally, regions with a different commodity than one you already have is most desirable, but two with the same commodity will double the production of said item.

Everything in Castles II runs under a point system. Your government's abilities are allotted a certain number, relations with the Pope and other players are designated from 1 to 9 as is the happiness of the people under your rule. You rule the realm by performing three different kinds of tasks. Each one is color coded for easier identification.

## Up to the Task

Each task has a certain number of ability points. The points may all be used at once for one task, or shared to enhance other tasks. The game is not turn based as is commonly seen. Time keeps rolling if you don't pause. Therefore, it is important to use all of your ability points at all times. In other words, you should have all three tasks going all the time using up every available ability point you have. Since the computer controlled players are after the throne along with you, there is no time to waste.

Administrative tasks include collecting commodities such as cut timber, refine gold, harvest food, and mine iron. Building castles is also done here. It is important to stock pile



Film clips from some strange old movies pop up to give the impression of what it would have been like in France in the 14th century, but is more like Hollywood in the early 20th.

goods as soon as you capture four or five territories. Resources will be depleted quickly as your realm begins to grow, so a strong economy makes life much easier. If your realm does not contain a region for all four commodities, you can trade with neighboring kingdoms.

You're probably wondering when and where castles come in to play. After all, it is the name of the game. Well, castles are the foundation for building a stable and strong kingdom. There are two kinds of castles, simply, small and large ones. As you design a castle, each piece used, walls, towers, etc., is worth a certain amount of points. A small castle of size fifty points or more will boost commodity productivity in the region, and a large castle of 100+ points will keep the people in the region from revolting as well. It also makes it harder for an invader to take the territory since they have to attack the castle with your army protected safely behind the walls.

You may design your own castle from scratch or choose one from the list of historical ones. Plus, you can always add on to reinforce it as you go along. Build an inner wall around the keep, or add more towers. The whole structure is built around the keep, which is always the first thing placed. You can scroll through the region to find an advantageous location to build. Finding a place that is surrounded by swamps or water will

impend an attackers progress since no soldier moves well through them. When you find the best place available, place the keep, and then the walls and towers go up around it. If a keep is captured, the region is lost to the invader.

Building a castle is an arduous task that not only uses up a fair amount of resources, but also a lot of manpower (ability points). The required minimum ability points are not that many, but to complete the task in a reasonable amount of time, a lot of shared effort from other tasks needs to be used. It is not unusual to pour a lot of effort into completing a castle since having one is so beneficial.

While it is under construction, you can go view the progress. Little workers will be running around hurriedly putting up walls and towers. The percent completed is also displayed. A castle that is damaged by an attack can be repaired using this same method, except you will only have to complete whatever is left to do. For instance, if the castle



You should build your castles in advantageous places such as by water, marsh land, or dense forest to hinder would be attackers.

was damaged down to eighty percent after a battle, then you will only have to build twenty. Progress is also shown on the aforementioned crest. A small tower appears and rises as construction nears completion. When battlements can be seen on top, it's done.

A second task category is Military. Military tasks include such things as recruiting troops, policing the realm, building ballistae, catapults, and siege towers, sabotaging and, of course, attacking territories adjacent to one of your own. There are three kinds of troops: infantry, archers, and knights. Each have specific advantages and disadvantages such as how many resources it takes to recruit one unit, and how they fight or move in different terrain. Troops must be paid in the spring, and fed in the fall. Delaying to do so will make them unhappy and begin to desert.

You are given the option to turn battles on or off at any time. With battles off, the computer produces an immediate result according to relevant factors. With battles on, the screen switches to a view of the land. If you are defending, you can choose the location of the battle (of course, if you have a castle built on your land, that's not a tough decision.) After the location is set, you can place your troops and weapons of destruction however you want. You can also give commands to each such as stand, destroy, melee or retreat. These can be changed as the battle goes on.

The last task category is Political. Political tasks are scouting and spying, improving diplomatic relations with foreign territories or the Pope, sending a merchant to trade goods, improving your happiness level, and sending a council to inform you



There are number of real European castles learn from. Some even come with film footage, and all give hints as to what advantages and disadvantages the design has.

of any threats to your realm as well as the Pope's relations with all the players.

Scouting can be done on any territory that borders one of your own, and will give information on the name, the occupant, and the commodity of the region. Scouting the same area every so often can produce different results since territories can exchange hands quickly. Accidentally attacking a region that is occupied by an ally or the Pope is not a good idea, so scouting frequently is important.

Spying will provide information about the number of troops and happiness level of a neighbor's army, as well as the number and locations of his occupied territories. The happiness level is important

because a player, including yourself, may not attack if it drops below three. Also, if the player is policing his realm and your spy is caught, your relations with him will drop.

Sending a merchant to trade goods that you have a surplus of for goods you need can be done with neighboring players. Good relations with the player is important to the success of the merchant, as is the number of political points applied to the task. Merchants are a viable alternative if a certain commodity does not lie within your realm. This is especially important if, at the beginning of the game, commodities are chosen to be distributed regionally instead of balanced throughout Bretagne.

Diplomacy is very important yet very tricky. When you want to improve relations with another player you must dispatch a diplomat and present an offer. For example, if your realm is strong you can request three gold and then two gold as a second offer from a weaker player to improve relations by one. If you are the weaker, offering a couple gold first and then offering a treaty as an alternative is a good idea. Good relations can help with trading and especially to keep your regions from being attacked. Good relations with the Pope is a must since you will one day be trying to claim the throne as the king of Bretagne.

As you successfully complete tasks, your overall rating for each category will increase. In effect, you will have more ability points in each category available to you. When they reach a certain level, a second task bar will appear thus allowing you to perform two tasks per category at the same time. The ability points for each



When a message arrives for you to look at, the screen changes to display it, and sometimes awaits a response. This message, unfortunately, is all too common.



The troops are preparing for bottle Hollywood style. This, of course, is Sir Bugs.

category can then be divided between the two, as well as shared with the other categories. For example, if you need more gold and fast, you can put all of your Administration points into refining gold, and even use a couple more from the Military and/or Political. If you're not so desperate and you have eight Administration points total, use five for refining gold and three for, say, harvesting food. The best rulers know how to optimize their resources. Generally, the more points allotted to a task the faster and/or more effectively it will be completed.

## So, You Want to Be King?

Successes in the game are awarded points that are accumulated continuously. When you pass 7,000, you earn the opportunity to petition the Pope to name you king. If you can keep the point total above 7,000 for 4 to 5 months after petitioning, and you have good relations with the Pope, you will be made king. As soon as you petition, though, your relations with the other players will drop considerably and may drop below 7,000 points.

Other features of Castles II are messages

and plots that can be turned on or off. If left on, periodic messengers will appear with news and information. Some of the plots will test your ability as a leader and as a diplomat. You will be asked to resolve a variety of situations that can affect your fortunes, both good and bad. You can make new friends, or new enemies, that can help, or hinder your quest for the crown. You may have to deal with problems outside of Bretagne, or find treasures, deal with disasters, and be forced to make crucial alliances.

Also, film clips will pop with messages at various moments during the game. For example, when a spy finishes a mission, a short clip showing a hooded man peaking through branches is shown. This feature can also be turned on or off during the game.

Included on the CD is BBC footage from a documentary film about how and why castles were planned, constructed, sieged and attacked prior to the age of gunpowder. This can help you design your own castles or attack an opponent's castle more effectively.

## How Well Can You Juggle?

The best aspect about Castles II is its simplicity in function and complexity in strategy. Like chess, the basic moves you can make are easy to learn, but the combinations and variations make it challenging enough. Unlike some war sims where you must have complete control of almost every little detail, making the game more work than fun, in Castles II, learning the basis of the game won't take more than a couple of hours. There are also difficulty levels to choose from allowing you to ease into serious game play (and, yes, the easy level is actually easy.) Once you familiarize yourself with the nuances of the

game, you can start to try out different strategies and see how they work. You may prefer to win through military might, or diplomatic skill, or whatever you can devise.

Though really intense military simulation fans might find it a bit too simplistic and lacking, those who buy a military sim more for entertainment value than for realism will enjoy this one. The three task categories are nicely intermingled and dependent on each other so that over emphasis on one will cause problems in other areas. In other words, you only really have three balls to juggle, which is challenging enough for most. Intense military sim fans might like to juggle four or more balls, and be able to without dropping one. Castles II does not require you to be so good a juggler.

The film clips from two old movies called *The Private Life of Henry IV* and *Alexander Nevsky* were too out of date to enhance the game at all. Putting black and white film clips in a state-of-the-art CD-ROM game was like using Breakout to simulate the castle battles—it borders on comical. The music was nice, though the same melody plays most of the time.

The interface was very easy to use and nicely designed. For example, if you want to run the same task with the same ability points repeatedly you only have to click on the task bar and it restarts. There are very few sub-menus making the game easy to learn and control. Important information is always ready at hand, and usually visible at all times. Something to keep track of yourself, though, is the information from a successful spying mission since it is not recorded anywhere. Also game time can be sped up as easily as holding down the right mouse button. Although you can pause the game, you can do nothing while it is stopped. It would be nice to have be able to set up your tasks while time stands still, and then start them all at once.

Lastly, the documentary footage is actually interesting and useful towards the game. I often used the historical castle designs for my own, sometimes making minor modifications before building them. The footage comes across clean and sharp, as does the sound.

The biggest problem though, would have to be the battles. The little soldier units do not always do what you want them to, and placing them as a group was often difficult. If you are defending a castle, it is hard to place the archers on the towers or walls. Even though you can switch the castle to a flat view, the guys in the towers stay suspended in air, but it looks like they are on the ground somewhere behind the castle. Also, you can't speed the battle up, and the men move fairly slow no matter the terrain. It is still a fun part of the game though it could have been better.

-Tasos Kafas



This castles has already been somewhat destroyed from a previous bottle or sabotage. It should not be too hard for the invaders to run these fellows out of town.



# Comparing Cards For Fun.

**IntelliPlay Bellies up to the Table for a Few Hands with the Locals.**

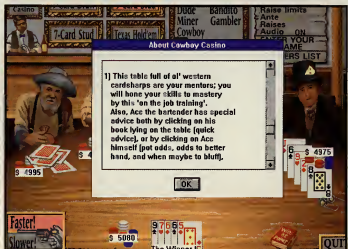
Boy, there's nothing like sitting down with a bunch of the buddies and playing a friendly game of poker. If you don't happen to have any card buddies who will sit down with you when you want, the boys of Cowboy Casino are available from IntelliPlay at any time.

This interactive poker really is less interactive than what we've come to understand this cyber-term actually means. In Cowboy Casino, there are tons of video clips that pop up at certain predetermined times. You really don't interact with them. Usually they insult you, bluff you, or try to intimidate you.

The game is touted as a poker teacher and the characters at the table are your "mentors". Okay. Instead of using electric shocks when you make a mistake, the mentors use "smart-aleck

remarks". Your choice of games to learn are: Five-card Draw, Five-

card Stud, Seven-card Stud, and Texas Hold'em. You simply choose







Meet the boys: Dude, Gambler, Bondito, Miner, and Cowboy. Bondito is the guy with the tall hat, or is that Dude? No, Dude is the one in the middle, while Cowboy is on the end. No, the one on the end has a donkey so he must be....

which game you want to play as listed in the picture boxes above the bar and the game begins.

You also have the option of a slow or fast deal, which will continue on into placing bets at lightning speeds. Cowboy Casino stresses this is an instructional game and you can use each hand to learn how to play a particular kind of poker despite the fact that you can't see opponents cards and there are no clues as to the why's of playing a given hand.

The only instructional portion of

the game comes from the bartender. By clicking on him, he'll figure the odds of your hand being the best and what the odds are of drawing a better hand. All this teaches me is that I need a spreadsheet program handy when I go to Vegas in order to figure out those odds. It's not something I plan on doing in my head.

If trying to decide if the odds are worth advancing or not is still too much for you, then there is a little red book just off to your right. Click on this book and you will be given

advice on what to do with that hand. All in all, the game manual says that the best way to learn how to play these card games is by doing. Each player begins the game with \$5,000 silicon dollars and default house rules. And in the final analysis, if you're losing more money than you're winning, you're not playing the game very well.

Cowboy Casino package does include a small instruction book from the Gambling Research Institute called "The Basics of Winning Poker."





Depending on what happens during a game of poker, video clips from one of the other "card sharks" will pop up and either acknowledge your superior playing abilities or point out your superior losing techniques.

This was written by J. Edward Allen and appears to be a simple, but information packed book. The strengths of this book lies in the fact that it explains how the poker games are played in the casinos.

The book explains how to bet, the betting terms, and the kinds of bets casinos expect. For many people, this information may help make a vacation trip to Las Vegas or Atlantic City a more fun and enjoyable trip.

Of course the book explains how to play the poker variations found the games. It also includes a handy dictionary of poker terms. For instance in lloball, the term smooth means the low cards after the highest card. 9 4 3 2 A is a smooth 9. Or there's Blind, which is the player to the left of the dealer who must make a mandatory bet on the first betting round. No, there's no way anything can make you a sure winner, but you will know the terms dealers will

use to declare you a winner or a loser.

Cowboy Casino has well played video clips and is easy to use. Some people may want something like this to learn how to play poker and it's variations. I believe this would be a good game to buy as a gift for someone where the expectations aren't sky high.

*-Steven Greenlee*



As with all poker games, there will come a time when you have to risk your money that your hand will be better than everybody else's hand. In this case the handy advice help suggests taking you partners to the dealers.

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HCPE



# Turn a 6-4-3 Into an RBI

**Hit for the Cycle Using ESPN Baseball: Hitting by IntelliPlay**

It's springtime again and the ivy is beginning to grow on the outfield wall at Wrigley Field. Little leaguers are working on the fundamentals of hitting and fielding and weekend softball teams are flocking to the batting cages to work out the kinks. If you're looking for some tips on how to improve your swing or help junior with his, ESPN Baseball: Hitting is here just in time.

Aside from heading off for a baseball camp or joining a real team, you would have a hard time finding the kind of instruction included on this CD. Your coach will be none other than Ron Fraser, former head of the University of Miami. For those who are not familiar with the man, his accomplishments would have to rank among the top in any NCAA Division I sport.

In his thirty year tenure at U of M, his teams made 19 consecutive NCAA tournament appearances, made it to the College World Series eight times winning it twice.

He is the winningest college coach up to his retirement in 1992 with three coach of

the year awards. 139 of his players have made it to the professional ranks.



**This CD is loaded with plenty of video clips and good advice as well as a number of other nice features that will expand your knowledge about hitting a baseball.**

If you are looking for a complete hitting tutorial to help you have a great summer at the plate, this might be what you need. The program runs in MS-Windows using QTW (Quick Time Windows) for the video. Be warned, though. The setup program will want to add a few lines to your autoexec.bat file. The problem is, it adds the lines anywhere it finds a PATH statement. If you have more than one, it will add it to all of them making a big mess. Save a backup of your autoexec.bat before you install.

The package is broken into three sections: the instructional section, Ask the Coach, and What's the Call.

The instructional chapters cover just about everything:

- Physical Mechanics
- Adjustment to Pitchers
- Mental Aspects
- Bunting
- Approaching Your at Bat
- Hitting Drills

Each chapter is broken down into subtopics that can be viewed continuously or in any order you choose. Most of the instruction is done with video clips that you can pause or

rewind, and show a player at bat on the field or in a batting cage. The video is clean and well done, with the addition of graphics to help illustrate certain points. A batter is shown from different perspectives to give a complete picture of the mechanics. Explanations are thorough and insightful.

thought of, and would probably never discover on your own. Let Coach Fraser show what he has learned over the last three decades.

The Coach's philosophy on hitting is essentially that the strike zone is so big, you must find your own zone. To determine where that zone is, find a pitch that you consistently hit well, determine where it is in the regular strike zone, and wait for the pitcher to throw it there. At least until you're two strikes down. Then it is important to be able to cover the whole strike zone, which is not easy. Many hitters will choke up to increase bat speed and control. If you are a power hitter, it is expected that you will strike out once in a while.



**An instructor appears to inform to talk to you about the finer points of the game.**

Have you ever heard of stepping in the bucket? That's when a hitter steps toward the foul line with his front foot. A good pitcher will recognize it and stand throwing outside. The remedy is to stand square, make a preparatory move as the pitcher winds up such as turning your left shoulder (for righties) inward towards the plate.

Coach Fraser also covers other obscure yet no less important topics such as why kids give up baseball at a young age, how to avoid being hit by a pitch, the bat stinging the hands, the role of the parents and, probably along with that role, overcoaching. One problem with this section is that only a photo of

is heard along with text. You then have three choices to make the right call. It would have been nicer to see video of the play, though, and not just hear an announcer's description, but the number of questions and the esoteric nature of some of them are appreciated.

One other addition is fifty top ten lists relating to major league hitting statistics up to and including 1991. A useful feature is that the lists are displayed in the video window in a text editor. This way you can update the lists yourself, or add someone from your home town to one of them to fool your friends.

In no way was this designed to be used only by children, or by parents to teach their children. This package is for any hitter who wants to improve their swing. It has the added benefit of allowing you to view whatever part you want at any time, something that it is a little more involved with a video tape, but you can watch any part of it continuously by turning on the AutoPlay feature. Plus, by using the standard Windows slide bar, you can fast forward or rewind sections quickly and easily.

Instructional materials are an important part of improving in any sport. Unfortunately, many of us don't have the time or the money for expensive private lessons. That is why products like this are indispensable. Of course,



**There are more top ten lists of hitting statistics than you could shake a bat at.**

rewind, and show a player at bat on the field or in a batting cage. The video is clean and well done, with the addition of graphics to help illustrate certain points. A batter is shown from different perspectives to give a complete picture of the mechanics. Explanations are thorough and insightful.

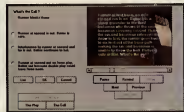
Getting through all of the instructional section will have you itching to get out on the field and show your teammates, and especially your opponents how its done. But that's not the end of the lesson. To really learn the intricacies of being a complete hitter, go Ask the Coach. The list includes sixty topics about things you may never have



**When you bunt, hold your bat at the proper angle and your head up.**

the coach is shown as you hear him speak. He is obviously using gestures in his descriptions that you'll have to visualize for yourself.

The last section is What's the Call, which is more for fun, but also very helpful. Most sports fans are probably familiar with this from TV's "You make the call." Here you choose a certain situation, and a play-by-play



**Try out your skills as an umpire and see if you can make the right call.**

they can't replace getting private lessons. But with their aid and a lot of practice, you can improve in any game.

Having sound fundamentals is where it all begins. Many video tapes are sold separately for beginners on up. This CD contains the whole spectrum of necessary instruction. Once you have mastered the basics you can graduate up to the advanced levels. If you're looking to get tips on the fine points of hitting, you can go ask one of the game's legendary coaches.

This summer you can proudly walk up to the plate and point at the left field fence as you make your own ESPN highlight.

--Tasos Kaiafas



# Mystery Under Glass. . .

**Tex Murphy's Latest is Just One Reason Our Editor Visited Access.**

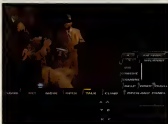
I had never been to Utah, let alone Salt Lake City, so I really had no idea what to expect. All I really knew about the state was that the Mormon population was high and there was a big lake with undrinkable water in the vicinity. Otherwise, I was at a loss.

Imagine my surprise when I discovered how nice Salt Lake City is. The city is clean and well laid out, and to my Chicago-bred eyes, the houses look midwestern—functional, not too plain, not elaborate. It looks like a city to raise your kids in. It has, in many ways, the best of both worlds. There are fine restaurants, theater and other cultural pastimes and the big buildings you'd expect in a good-sized city, but it has many of the charms of a smaller community.

Ah, but this is not a travel log to the ski areas in the Western United States. And, in spite of the number of Shriners in my hotel in SLC, it's not a plea to hold a convention there. One of those things that you would-

n't expect to find in Salt Lake City is just what I went there to find. I went for an early glimpse of a futuristic San Francisco with a possible sidetrip to Canada or Hawaii.

In just a second, I'm sure that comment will make some sense. I trekked out to Utah to visit with the people responsible for the making of *Under a Killing Moon*, Access Software.



**Not everyone is amused by Tex's occasional wisecracks.**

The corporate offices of Access Software are relatively near the airport on the appropriately named Amelia Earhart Drive. It's a one-story building and, while it covers a lot of area, it's cramped on the inside. Access has grown to fit its surroundings and now threatens to outgrow it's current space. On the premises are a number of programmers, producers, designers, writers, media people, tech support staff, and many others; a disk and CD pressing facility; a shipping room and a simulation area dedicated to reproducing *Links 386 Pro* on a projected screen (more on that later).

The on-site tech support staff is growing larger and larger to reflect Access' commitment to customer service. They call back customers to check up on things, follow up on problems and even answer questions relating to other company's software. While many of them answer questions for the various *Links* games, the current question is how and where to expand to cover the projected influx of calls for *Under a*





Director and co-designer Chris Jones and actor Brian Keith go through the script before shooting the next scene.

Killing Moon. Whether or not a new number will be added is still up for discussion.

## Ambition Versus Game Play

The third story in the Tex Murphy series of adventure games is easily the most ambitious of any of Access' previous undertakings, probably the adventure genre, and quite possibly gaming in general. Under a Killing Moon is now slated to be shipped on three CDs which will be used almost to their fullest capacity. How much is that? To install it to a hard drive, you'd need about 2 gigabytes. To put it on floppies, you'd need around 1,250 high-density disks. This is a lot of game.

Imagine, if you will, a game that looks similar in quality to what Trilobyte and Virgin put on the table with *The 7th Guest*. Lush visuals of a futuristic San Francisco complete with its own seamy underside of mutants, creeps, evil doers as well as the posh and fashionable spots. Now, imagine that as you wander



This looks like a job for Superman, but I guess Tex will have to suffice.

around the game, you aren't restricted to a specific pathway.

You, as Tex Murphy, must literally exist in this futuristic San Francisco. You explore, really explore all of the locations for clues. What does this mean in terms of game play? Quite a bit. In a standard adventure title, the player might, for instance, click on the desk to have the protagonist search it for any usable items. Here, you need to open the drawers, root through what ever is in them, decide what is important and what isn't, and take it with you. Now multiply that by the number of objects to search, move or look at and the number of locations you can go to, and you come closer to what most people think of when they talk about virtual reality. The opinion of the design team is that this is as close as we've come to VR, and the chances are very good that they are right.

Needless to say, I was pretty impressed by



Morgat Hilder applies the finishing touches to her make-up.

what I saw when I first got to play around a little bit with UAKM. What I played was hardly a final version, interface tweaks as well as game play tweaks are in progress now, but the interface was surprisingly smooth and intuitive. It's mostly mouse, and even for a die-hard keyboard hog like yours truly, the game was playable and controllable in just a few minutes.

The graphics are pretty, no doubt. One of the more impressive parts of the game is that all of the actors were shot in front of a blue screen, and all of the scenery, even the bars and desks that they occasionally lean on, do not exist in the real world. And yet, the people look like a part of their environment.

Sound is also good, and the digitized voices are very clean. Again, this is still unfinished, but the soundtrack was top-notch.

Why am I telling you all of this? Mainly to prove a point. In spite of how attractive to the senses the game is, despite the strength of the interface, no matter how much I enjoy the story, these things are not the most exciting or impressive parts of UAKM. What is truly worth talking about is not only where this game puts us as far as the approach to virtual reality, but how much dedication went into making this product push the computer gaming envelope further out than we thought it would be at this time last year.



While the bluescreen backdrop may be plain, the crew must make sure that each scene is lit correctly before shooting.

## Acting on the Small Screen

One would hope that with a game this ambitious, that it would have a quality storyline to back up the high-end technicals. Fortunately, Access had Aaron Conners around to do the script.

As the game got more and more ambitious, moving from one CD to two and then from two CDs to three, the script had to be modified. The game was simply getting too big to allow the designers to include all of their ideas. To include the level of interactivity that was desired, scenes had to be removed. Don't worry about losing story, though. Conners estimates that UAKM will take a good gamer about 60 hours to complete.

To accurately produce the correct feel for the game, the team spent lunch hours watching old black-and-white movies of Charlie Chan, the Thin Man, and other dimstore/detective novel films. The idea was to remind the team of the flavor that was intended for *Under a Killing Moon*. It's supposed to look, feel and play like the user is in the middle of the latest novel by Mickey Spillane.

And it does. The characters are just seedy enough, just stereotypical enough to the genre to make *Under a Killing Moon* seem natural to the potboiler-style of story telling. The voice-over narration contains the hard-boiled observations and occasionally extended (and strange) similes that make the detective story unique. For example, on viewing an unidentifiable object in a local electronics store, Tex comments "It looks like a core sample from an old sofa."



Chris Jones offers his vision of a particular scene to Margot Kidder. This drab looking background will soon become a rich, detailed environment.



A quartet of pictures from *Under a Killing Moon* including one of Brian Keith (top right) and Russell Means (bottom left). What's Tex looking at in the top left photo?



A strange analogy, but fitting for the object in question.

The actors were filmed in front of a blue screen located in Access' home office. Once you've seen the game itself, it's tough to think that all of the actors were shot in this one tiny space. The game seems sprawling, huge, detailed, but all of the video was taken in the most plain and featureless area of the offices. Once again, the illusion of Hollywood works and everything is not what it seems. While the characters in the game may look like they are leaning on the counter of a bar, that bar doesn't exist, except as a painting.

According to Chris Jones, the game's director and the co-designer with Conners, the professional actors hired for *Under a Killing Moon*, notably Brian Keith, Margot Kidder and Russell Means found nothing unusual in the shoot at all. Keith got his start as a child actor in silent movies and

now has come full circle—from silents to talkies to color to television to interactive computer software. Margot Kidder, thanks to the Superman movies, was more than familiar with blue screen work, while Means was interested in virtually every aspect of what was going on.

Jones commented that the actors were somewhat skeptical about what was being done until they got a look. "They weren't sure exactly what we were going to do with them," he said. "But when they saw that the final product would really be them and would really be them acting, they were excited about the project."

Despite their reservations, the actors really didn't need to be told what to do. While the crew might have envisioned a scene done a particular way, the actors, who after all, do this for a living, did their own thing, and were more often than not right about the choices they made for how to play their character and how to act out a scene.

The actors were painstakingly cut out of the film shot, then placed onto the painted backgrounds. The end result is shown in the pictures above: the characters look like a part of their environment.

What started out as a simple game has become something that has taken over virtually all of Access' time and effort. With the exception of a couple of people, all of the company's work force has been devoted to *Under a Killing Moon* in an effort to finish the project. Before starting up the next Tex Murphy, the UAKM team will return the favor by assisting the crew working on the next phase of Links.

## Fore! . . .86

While Access has been around for awhile and has made a lot of games in the past, the



**Under a Killing Moon combines state-of-the-art graphics with an innovative and simple to use control scheme and inventory system.**

product that most people think of when the company's name pops up is Links or Links 386 Pro. While opinions differ from person to person, many PC golfers think Links 386 is the best golf simulation, if not the best sports sim on the market. A lot of professional golfers agree with that statement, too, since the company claims several top PGA money-winners as dedicated players.

So, it's good news for Macintosh owners that Access has decided to bring Links 386 out for the Mac, with a name change, of course. The game is called Links Pro Macintosh and looks and plays virtually exactly like the PC version. A few of the menu choices have been changed—it's easier to set up the viewing window for instance, and several other choices have been moved. Per the standard Mac format, the menus now come from the top bar. The game play is identical. For certain Macs, voice recognition of shot and club selection will be available, as will network capabilities.

Finally, for Power PC users, Links Pro Macintosh will take advantage of Power PC transparently.

It also comes as good news, although no surprise, that Access is currently developing the next thing in golf simulations, Links 486. The basic Links 386 interface has been cleaned up a bit and refined, making the game play smoother. More importantly, the already crisp graphics have been redone, the color palette has been dramatically increased into the million range, and the overall game itself looks quite a bit sharper. Links players will have some changes to get used to—the golfers are now much larger on the screen and the player's point of view has been dropped to right behind the golfer rather than high above. It makes for a different experience.

Speaking of different experiences, it should come as no surprise that at the company where the crew making a mystery game spent lunch hours watching black-and-white detective

movies that the crew who works on Links plays a lot of golf. Access is situated near a golf course and the Links crew has an agreement with those who work there. At lunch, they play a couple of holes, just to keep the game in perspective and in focus.

But what happens when it rains? That's where the indoor facility comes in. Set up in one of the back rooms is a projection system that projects the game onto a large screen. The player uses a real club to hit a real ball into said screen. Motion sensors track the height and velocity of the ball, and compute an accurate reading of the ball's trajectory.

What happens is something like this: I step up and eye my shot, and while I've never really played Banff Springs, what I see looks a lot like the first tee. I swing, knocking the ball into the screen. When the ball hits, a computer image takes over and flies into the background, showing me where the ball would have landed had I really been at Banff. It seemed pretty accurate—I pack a nasty slice, and I hit virtually everything to the right. If there is a shortcoming to this device, it's that you have to be at least twelve feet from the



**Sink this putt, and you'll tie Al Geiberger's record setting 59.**

hole, so if you chip or putt to within that distance, you have to enter the additional number of shots you would have taken. Regardless of this slight problem, this simulator is a blast. It remains a mystery to me how anyone at Access gets anything meaningful done.

Links 486 plays much in the same way as Links 386, so those with experience will find the game easy to adapt to. One of the plans for 486 is that the courses will be more than simply 18 holes. Instead, the packages will be much closer to the actual experience of going to a top of the line golf resort.

## What Comes Next. . .

The work on Under a Killing Moon is now almost complete, and the game should be shipping soon. Aaron Connors has already begun scripting the fourth Tex Murphy adventure, and Chris Jones has made the comment that from this point on, three CDs is the minimum. They could go to four, but they'll never go back to two.

*-Steve Honeywell*



**If you think it's PC but it's not, it must be Links Pro Macintosh. The main differences a player of Mac and PC Links will notice is the easier access to menus and statistics.**

Welcome to our round-up of the past several months in CD-ROM gaming. The products on the following few pages are listed in alphabetical order with some clarifying remarks about each product. For your convenience, Entertainment games are marked in blue, infotainment in greenish yellow and edutainment in purple

**Aegis** (By *Software Sorcery* for PC CD-ROM - Simulation) Military strategy comes to the CD-ROM market with Aegis. Take command of a fleet of ships or just one vessel as you do battle on the surface of the waves. Various difficulty levels and scenarios are available, allowing both the experienced strategist and the novice gamer to play. Both Super VGA and VGA versions are included. VGA shown here.



**Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp** (By *Ebook* for PC CD-ROM - Any ages) Of all the tales of Sheherezade, none is more widely known or more beloved than that of Aladdin. Now Sheherezade takes you on a magical journey through this tale of the 1,001 Arabian Knights. As the story progresses, the player is able to make selections that determine further choices later in the story.

**Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space** (By *Interplay* for PC CD-ROM - Simulation) Relive the mad scramble to put a man into orbit and on the moon with Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space. Playing as either the Russian or American space program, you must make the decisions on what to research and what to attempt as you vie to become the more successful space program in the 1960's. Random occurrences make the game situation different each time you play.



**C.H.A.O.S. Continuum** (By *Creative Multimedia* for PC CD-ROM - Action) An incredibly powerful computer system has grown strong enough to capture the scientists that created it. Now it threatens to take over the world. Only you have the guts and the ability to stop this living computer in its tracks and preserve the integrity of the space-time continuum.

**The Coffee Break CD** (By *Villa Crespo* for PC CD-ROM - Game Package) Perhaps the best reason for shovelware is products like this: a collection of 21 different pre-released floppy products under one roof and for one low price. The first games in the Coffee Break series are included and can be installed, played and deleted from your hard drive with ease. Everything from arcade games to gambling simulations is included on this CD.



**Comanche Maximum Overkill** (By *NovaLogic* for PC CD-ROM - Helicopter Simulation) One of the most groundbreaking simulations ever created, Comanche Maximum Overkill received accolades for its stunning visuals from nearly every game reviewing magazine around. While realism occasionally takes a back seat to playability, CMO should provide both the dedicated simulation player and the sim newcomer with an exciting time in the sky. Several mission series included offer extended game play.



**Conspiracy** (By *Virgin Games* for PC CD-ROM - Adventure) Released as KGB in the disk-based world, Conspiracy contains several upgrades from the earlier version. This new revamped KGB features Donald Sutherland as the late father of the player character. You must investigate crimes from

the Soviet state and look out for those out to get you.



**Critical Path** (By *Media Vision* for PC CD-ROM - Adventure) The character and his counterpart, nicknamed Kat, have crashed on an island that is more of an insane asylum than anything. While Kat wanders around the complex looking for the materials necessary to effect escape from the island, the player watches her every move and advises on what steps Kat should take next. While the premise is interesting, the puzzles are too easy to provide much challenge (some answers are printed boldly in the manual) and too little interaction offers an incomplete experience for the gamer.



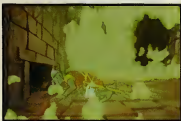
**Dark Sun** (By *Strategic Simulations* for PC CD-ROM - Role Playing) Based on the series of Advanced Dungeons and Dragons Forgotten Realms games, Dark Sun takes place in a brutal world of gladiatorial combat and danger. Players must lead their party of adventurers from the arena pits to eventual triumph. The CD-ROM version of Dark Sun is virtually identical to the disk-based game.

**Dennis Miller: That's News to Me** (By *Sanctuary Woods* for PC/Mac CD-ROM - Comedy) Comedian Dennis Miller takes you on a humorous tour of 1993. Click on a month and select a general topic to hear a



number of jokes told by the former anchor for Saturday Night Live's Weekend Update.

**Dragon's Lair** (By *Ready Soft* for PC CD-ROM - Action) One of the best loved and most played arcade games, Dragon's Lair is a very close recreation of the laser disc classic. Rejoice Dirk the Daring as he tries to save the Princess Daphne from the clutches of Singe the Dragon and relive a chunk of video game and arcade history.



**Dungeon Hack** (By *Strategic Simulations* for PC CD-ROM - Role Playing) For those who want nothing more from their role-playing games than endless combat, SSI provides Dungeon Hack. Create limitless dungeons based on player-selected variables, then explore with no intent other than slaying everything. This game is identical to the disk-based Dungeon Hack.

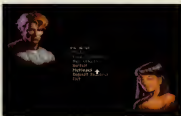


**Eye of the Beholder Trilogy** (By *Strategic Simulations* for PC CD-ROM - Role-Playing) One of the most highly touted role-playing series comes in its entirety to CD-ROM with this SSI package. While the player does have to load each of the games onto his or her hard drive to play, the CD makes a convenient and cost-effective storage medium for the games.

**Forever Growing Garden** (By *Media Vision* for PC CD-ROM - Ages 4-8) Kids can learn about what it takes to plan and grow a garden with Forever Growing Garden from Media Vision. In addition to the real plants, kids can grow fantasy plants that add excitement and color to their garden. Once grown, fruits and vegetables can be taken to market, but only those with fair prices will sell to consumers.

**Gabriel Knight: The Sins of the Fathers** (By *Sierra On-Line* for PC CD-ROM - Adventure) Featuring the vocal talents of Tim Curry and Mark Hamill, Gabriel Knight is an

impressive production from start to finish. Centering around the owner of a rare bookstore/dismantled author, this game spins a web of intrigue, voodoo and murder taking place in the city of New Orleans. Some graphic material and strong language along with potential nightmare-producing fun is contained in this product, so parents should play after the kids go to bed.



**Hawaii High: The Mystery of the Tiki** (By *Sanctuary Woods* for PC/Macintosh CD-ROM - Ages 8 and up) While most games and educational products are designed for either both sexes or just boys, Sanctuary Woods has created a duo of heroines just for girls. Join Jennifer and Maleah as they try to solve the mystery of the stolen tiki. Only by choosing the right path can they catch the bumbling thieves responsible for the crime.

**The Horde** (By *Crystal Dynamics* for PC CD-ROM - Simulation) Actor Kirk Cameron stars as a newly knighted servant to his king. He must reclaim lands lost to the voraciousness of the Horde of creatures matched in hunger only by their own stupidity. Building sequences, action sequences and full-motion video clips are interspersed throughout the game.

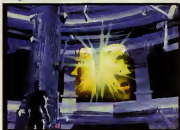


**It's a Wonderful Life** (By *Kinesoft* for PC CD-ROM - Movie/Trivia Game) One of the most beloved movies in American cinema comes to the PC CD-ROM. Packed on two CDs, this product contains the entirety of the movie as well as a trivia game, the complete script of the film, directors notes, possible cast lists and more. Excellent data base features allow the user to skip to any part of the movie by entering a part of the script or a frame number.

**Jump Raven** (By *Paramount Interactive* for Mac CD-ROM - Action) The genetic material for extinct species of animals has been stolen

by a gang of ruthless punks. It's your job to go out and stop them using a highly-advanced military craft. Choose a co-pilot and a theme song and start blasting.

**Kether** (By *Philips* for CD-I - Action) For the non-violent gamer, Kether is a sort of non-shooter that provides action without requiring violence on the part of the player. Created by Infogrames, developers of Alone in the Dark, Kether is visually stunning, although somewhat lacking in game play. Players race down various levels steering their ship around obstacles rather than crashing into or obliterating them.



**The Labyrinth of Time** (By *Electronic Arts* for PC CD-ROM - Adventure) Taking the role of a person who lives in a drab world of workday life, the player of The Labyrinth of Time enters a vibrant world that contains hidden dangers. King Minos has caused Daedalus to construct a new labyrinth that will allow him to control all of space and time. Now, with Daedalus' help, the character must find his or her way through the maze and stop Minos' plan before it is too late. A weak interface mars an otherwise interesting challenge.

**Lands of Lore: The Throne of Chaos** (By *Virgin Games* for PC CD-ROM - Role-Playing/Adventure) The wicked Scotia has discovered an item of incomparable power. With her new-found might, she seeks to conquer the kingdom. Now you, as one of several characters, must undertake the quest to stop her. The game play is a combination of role-playing and adventure gaming, making an interesting blend of styles. As you progress, you will receive assistance from various non-player characters you encounter. Patrick Stewart of Star Trek: The Next Generation reads the part of the king.



**The Legends of Oz** (By *Multicom* for PC/Macintosh CD-ROM - Any ages) The writings of L. Frank Baum come to life on this CD-ROM. Follow along with your favorite character, seeing the story from his or her point of view. Characters can be switched at any time during play. The Legends of Oz was created in part by Baum's grandson Roger Baum. Included with the package are several educational games and some new Oz characters.

**Lunatic** (By *Paramount Interactive* for Mac CD-ROM - Action) The Earth has been taken over by a horde of alien creatures. Now, the only chance the Earth people have of overcoming their new foe is at the hands of the people living on the moon. Take on a ton of alien baddies in a first-person perspective action game.

**Man Enough** (By *Tsunami* for PC CD-ROM - Social Simulation) Try your hand at charming half a dozen women who want you to be the apple of their eye and the barb in their wire. Plan dates that will attract them to you, then say the right things to get them to fall for you. Be warned; the humor is potentially offensive and relatively sophomoric, and anyone experienced with real interaction will find little of reality in this game.



**Microcosm** (By *Psygnosis* for PC CD-ROM - Action) A corporate president has had a device implanted in his brain that makes him susceptible to suggestions from a rival company. You, in a miniaturized submarine-like vehicle must enter the patient's body and stop your enemies from taking over the mind of your boss.



**The New Kid on the Block** (By *Brøderbund* for PC CD-ROM - Ages 6-12) Brøderbund continues the Living Books series with this

collection of children's poetry by Jack Prelutsky. While this title contains the same overall level of quality as other Living Books titles, the illustrations are much more sparse, thus reducing the number of on-screen hot spots.

**Prehistoria** (By *Grolier* for PC CD-ROM - Encyclopedia) The world of nature before human beings arrived on the scene is yours to explore with Prehistoria. Use the powerful database feature to locate both well-known and little-known creatures now extinct. This encyclopedia is both informative and easy to use.



**Putt-Putt Goes to the Moon** (By *Humongous Entertainment* for PC CD-ROM - Ages 3-8) Humongous Entertainment brings their little car back for a third game. This time, Putt-Putt is inadvertently put on the moon due to an accident at the fireworks factory. Now it's up to the player to lead Putt-Putt through his adventure on the moon and to perform enough good deeds to get the car back home.



**Quantum Gate** (By *Media Vision* for PC CD-ROM - Adventure) An ambitious project, Quantum Gate offers the player a look at "virtual cinema," a combination of movie-like video clips and game play. While an attempt was apparently made to provide something for every gamer, Quantum Gate falls somewhat short in the long run. Muddled instructions and an inconclusive grasp on the story's and the game's direction make this a game that provides too few thrills in between the lulls.

**Rebel Assault** (By *LucasArts* for PC CD-ROM - Action) Currently the best-selling entertainment CD for the PC ever created, Rebel Assault banks on the huge appeal of

the Star Wars movies as well as the success of X-Wing. Tremendous graphics and sound enhance a game otherwise hampered by an occasionally difficult control scheme and often chunky movement. Perseverance pays off with this one, and the visuals are worth more than a look.



**Red Shift** (By *Maris* for Mac CD-ROM - Astronomy) While this CD-ROM contains no game element in the slightest, Red Shift should provide hours of entertainment for anyone interested in gazing at the stars. Dozens of high-quality graphics abound on this CD, and an easy-to-use interface makes getting from place to place simple. Both the serious astronomer and the neophyte looking for a good way to get started will find Red Shift to provide everything they could expect from this sort of product.

**Return to Zork** (By *Activision* for PC CD-ROM - Adventure) The sixth game of the Zork series, Return to Zork provides a unique look at the world that got so many people hooked on computer gaming in the first place. Using digitized footage of actors, Return to Zork provides an excellent looking quest to go along with solid game play and a good story. Any Infocom fans from way back when will not want to pass this game up.



**Rosemary West's House of Fortunes** (By *Villa Crespo* for PC CD-ROM - Fortune Telling) Ever have one of those days when you wish you knew what was coming? If so, check out this title from Villa Crespo. Computer fortune telling expert Rosemary West provides you with five different methods of divination as diverse as crystal ball gazing and numerology. Additional audio and video have been included on the CD-ROM version of this title.



**Sitting on the Farm** (By *Sanctuary Woods* for PC/Macintosh CD-ROM - Ages 7-10) The first release in the Sanctuary Woods I-Learn line of titles, *Sitting on the Farm* is based on a children's song. Using the premise of a simple picnic turned into fiasco thanks to a parade of animals, *Sitting on the Farm* provides kids with hours of amusement while teaching them writing, spelling and keyboard skills. This product comes with both an English and French language version.

**Star Trek 25th Anniversary** (By *Interplay* for PC CD-ROM - Adventure) Join the cast and crew of the original Star Trek television show as they journey where no one has gone before. While the game play and puzzles are exactly the same as the previous floppy disk release, Interplay has added the voices of the original Star Trek cast members including William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy to help enhance game play.



**Terminator 2: Judgement Day Chess Wars** (By *Capstone* for PC CD-ROM - Chess Simulation) Combine the excellence of the Grandmaster Chess game engine with the high-action science fiction drama of the Terminator, and you get T2 Chess Wars. While the animation is lacking in some places, the overall quality of the game's engine makes up for any shortcomings. Play the GM Chess mode, not the T2 chess mode.

**The Tortoise and the Hare** (By *Brøderbund* for PC CD-ROM - Ages 3 and up) Brøderbund retells this classic fable of Aesop by placing the two famous racers in a modern-day setting. This latest addition to the Living Books series of CD-ROMs provides hours of amusement for kids with the entertaining story as well as the number of



hotspots and animations on each of the numerous screens. The story can be heard and read in both English and Spanish.

**Tuneland** (By *7th Level* for PC CD-ROM - Ages 3 and up) Relative newcomer 7th Level presents a multimedia experience for kids of all ages. Dozens of screens, each with multiple hotspots, fully orchestrated songs, sound effects and more create a unique environment for children to explore. This title is loaded with features. The game is hosted by, and the voice of the main character Lil Howie is provided by, comedian and actor Howie Mandel.



**Voyeur** (By *Philips* for CD-I - Adventure) While the CD-I system may have some difficulties producing an action game, an adventure game is much more what the hardware and controllers were built for. In *Voyeur*, the player must spy on happenings at Hawke Manor, the home of a presidential contender. As the name would suggest, some of the things the player might spy through the windows of Hawke Manor are not the most wholesome, or the most appropriate for younger or sensitive gamers. Use discretion and keep the curtains drawn when playing.



**Wolfpack** (By *NovaLogic* for PC CD-ROM - Submarine Simulation) Originally released



way back in 1990 by Brøderbund, Wolfpack has been given more than a new coat of paint for its CD-ROM inception. While much of what has been redone is either cosmetic or additions in terms of the number of missions contained in the game, simulation players who missed the original will not be disappointed with the game despite the age of its core program.

**World of Xeen** (By *New World Computing* for PC CD-ROM - Role-Playing) Currently one of the best values for the computer role-player, *World of Xeen* provides the gamer with three full role-playing games on two CD-ROMs. Those who played the disk-based versions will find little in the way of innovation here, but for those unfamiliar with the Might and Magic style of gaming, *World of Xeen* CD provides an excellent place to start, particularly for the low retail price.

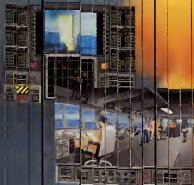
**Wrath of the Gods** (By *Luminaria* for Mac CD-ROM - Adventure) Greek mythology meets comedy as you take on the role of a generic Greek hero looking to duplicate many of the feats of classic mythological protagonists. Full-motion video sequences and a tongue-in-cheek attitude and outrageous anachronisms (like an ATM in Hades) combine for an interesting and unique game.



**Xplora! Peter Gabriel's Secret World** (By *Interplay* for Mac CD-ROM - Music Adventure) Explore the secret world of musician Peter Gabriel with this interactive Macintosh CD-ROM. As you travel through the game, collect objects in your virtual suitcase to allow you access to new and more exciting parts of the game. Included is the entirety of the *Us* album as well as audio clips from earlier Gabriel works.



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